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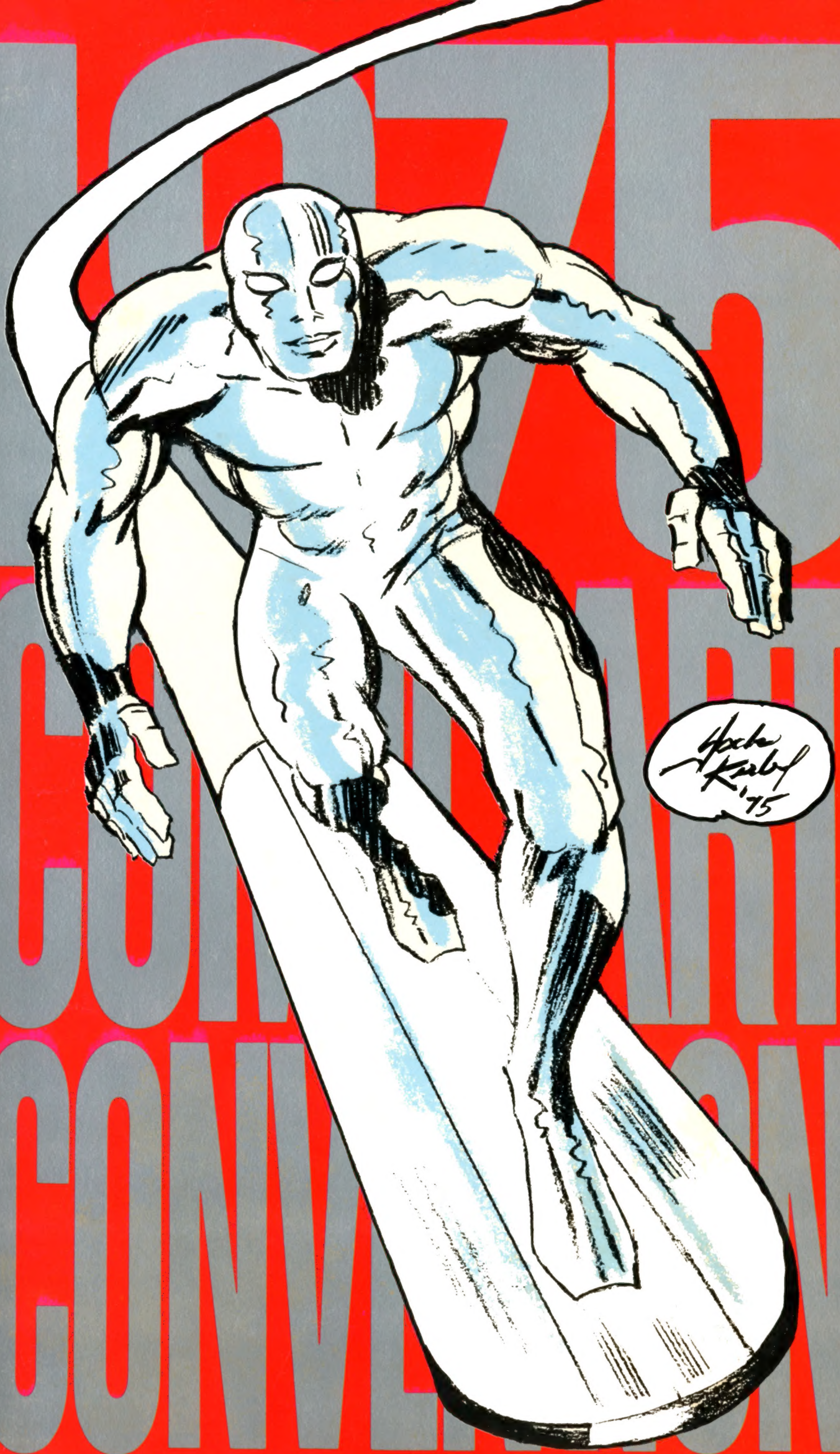

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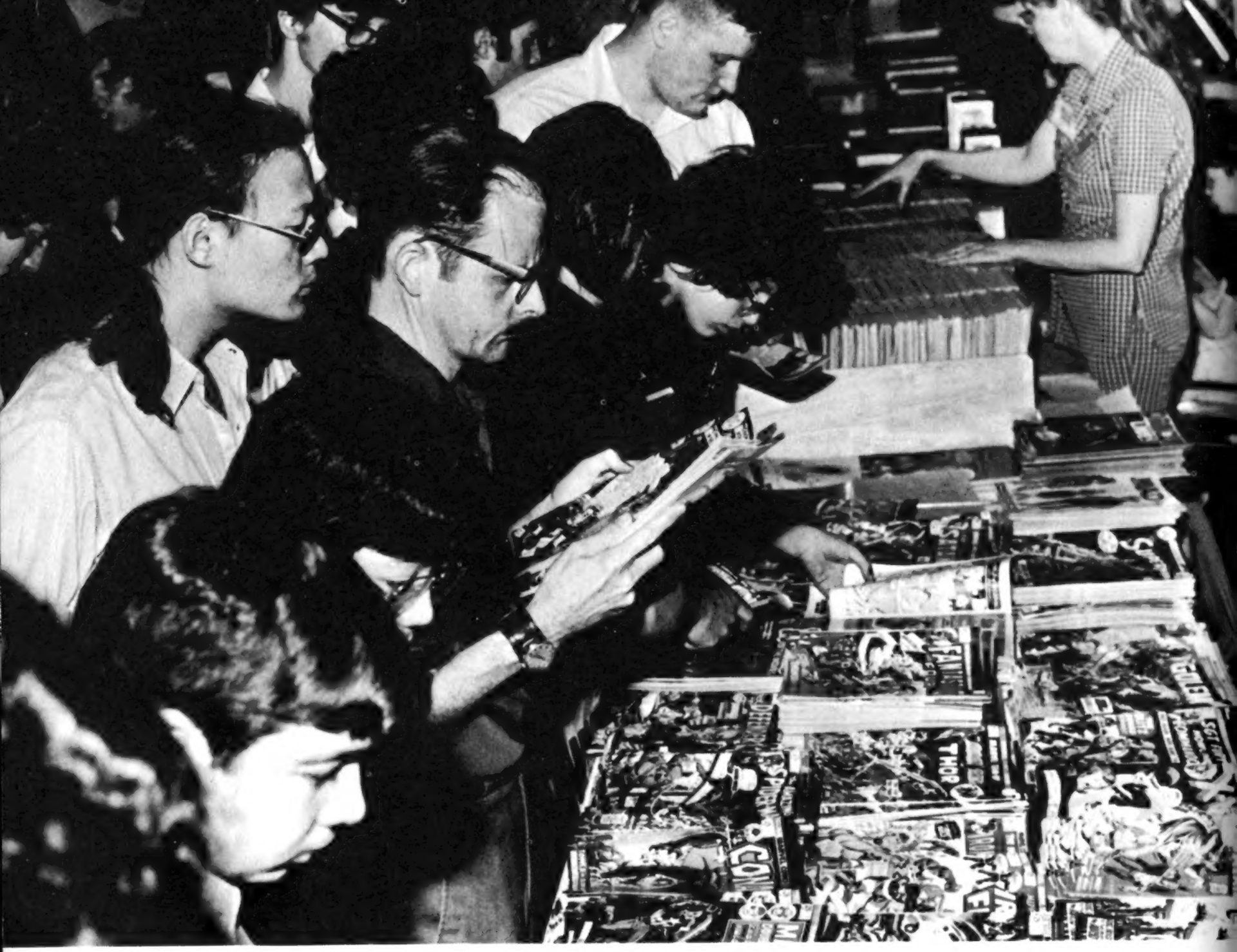

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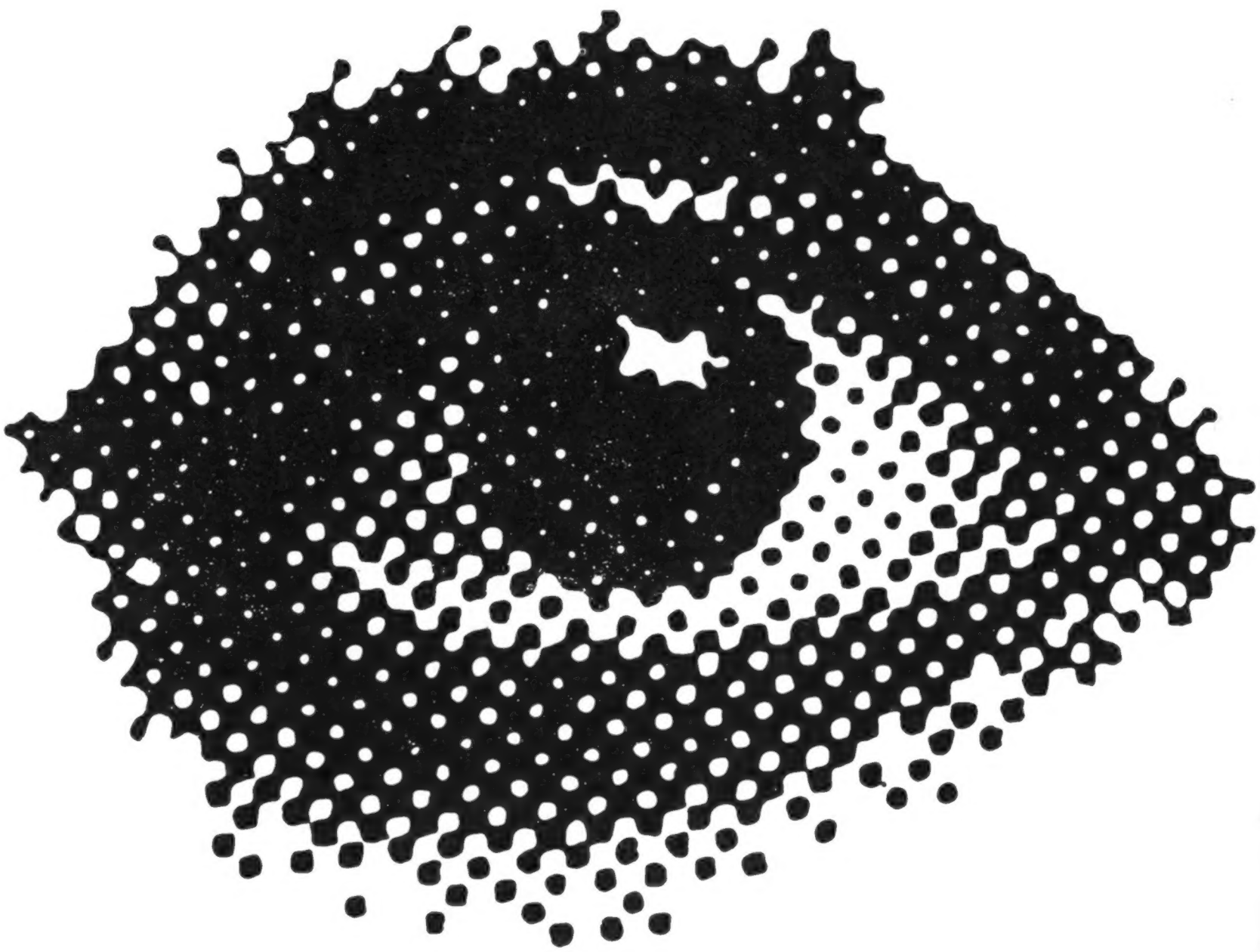

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LOST IN THE ALLSTARS

I never used to hear my mother call me to eat or to run errands. She always blamed my deafness to her calls on comic books. She was almost always right. When I climbed into a big 64-page, thick, color adventure it was impossible to dig me out. I was spellbound by the plot turns and vicariously acting out the scenes. My arm shot up to ward off the bullets with my (Captain America's, really) shield. I grunted every "Unhh!" when the fists began their pounding! I was **involved** in those books.

The 1940's stretched from when I was 6 until I was 16, and they included a war that united us all to face a common evil. As impressionable as anyone during those character-building years, I was getting my patriotism, my satire, my understanding of good and evil, even my **posture** from comic books. To this day I can attribute certain areas of my personality-mosaic to comic books, just as I can attribute other areas to family, school, or environment. It isn't difficult to know why they had so forceful an effect on me. I read many thousands. (**So** many, that basic truth sounds like wild exaggeration!)

No, they weren't **all** I read. I found **Tom Sawyer** at the age of

PHIL SEULING ★

the 1940's

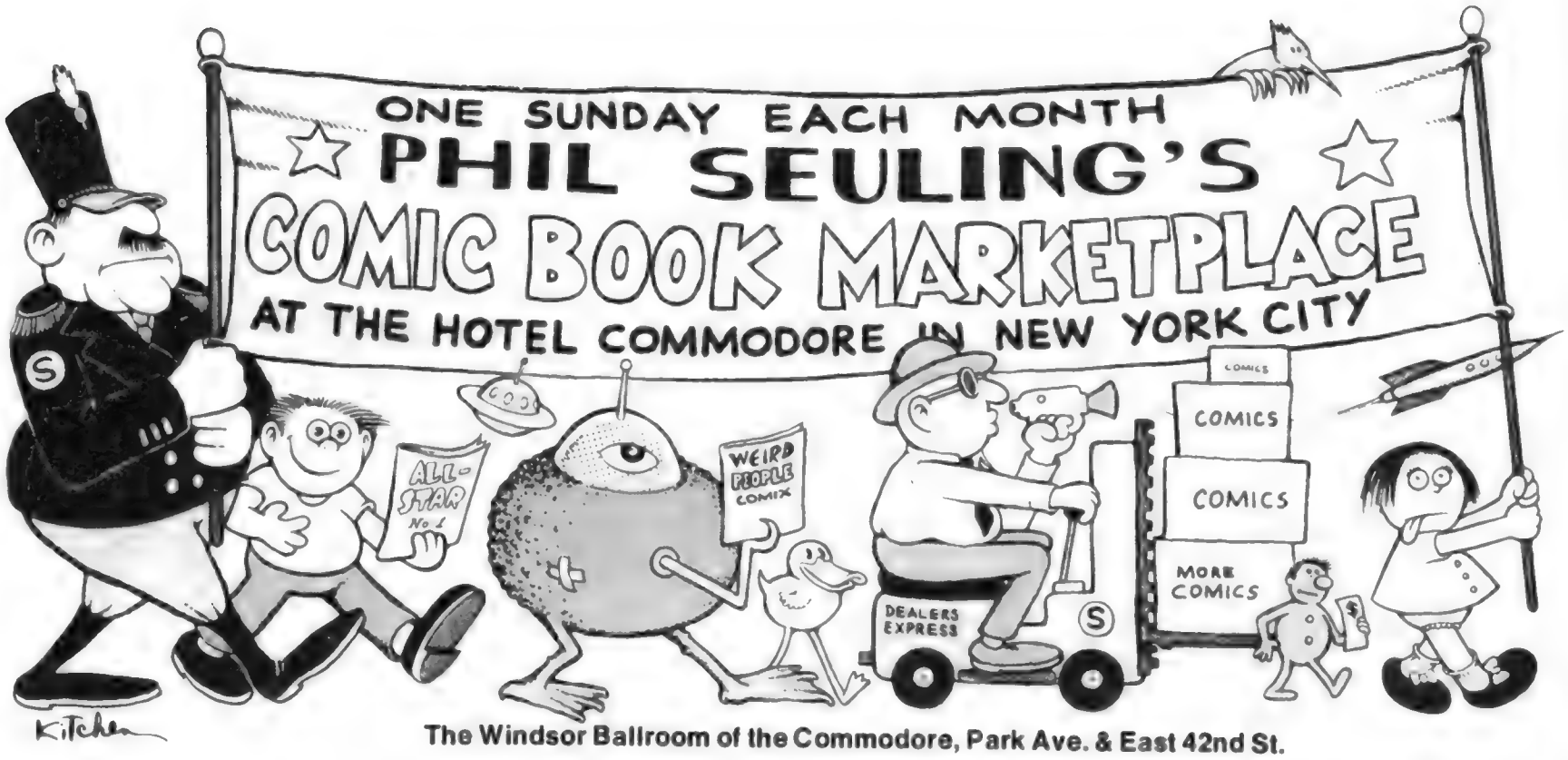
nine, and though it took me two weeks, I read and lived every word. It was the first time that literature had expanded my experience and fascinated my imagination. After that, I looked everywhere to repeat this "total involvement" trip. Robert Louis Stevenson flopped. That wasn't my language. Zane Grey knocked me out, and the Western bug led me to two series of "boys" books, **The Pony Rider Boys** and **The X-Bar-X Boys.** Wonderful! But I had become both fast and insatiable, and getting these books for gifts at Christmas and birthdays, even four or five at a clip, wasn't enough to keep me reading and adventuring as much as I wanted (**needed**). But there were comic books.

On porches on rainy days we brought out our hoards of comics, and we all read each others'. On summer vacation, my folks bought me **Bulletman**, and **Dick Cole**. I cashed in deposit bottles and bought **Marvel Mystery** (Torch **and** Sub-Mariner; even Torch **vs.** Sub-Mariner). My father was a postman and he brought home bunches of books people on his route were going to discard (**Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Capt. America**). I read even my **sister's** comics! (Why, in my memory, can't I find even **one** copy of Disney's Comics and Stories with a cover?) I found a copy of **Gift** once that was over 300 pages, and I disappeared into that book for all the hours that made up a long ago summer afternoon. I read them all—**Supersnipe** and **Green Lama**, and the strange old Centaur stuff, like **The Arrow** and **Fantom of the Fair** (in **Amazing Mystery Funnies**).

Like all kids during that time of life, my mind was in search of answers, looking for a way to handle the ideas we began to encounter. We were too young for "serious" literature. We were no longer at the heyday of the pulps, and anyway they had no pictures! Comic books provided a scaled down view of the world, one I could focus on. I loved them. (Collect them? Of course not. Why would anyone **want** to, when there were always so many around any time you wanted them?)

A few years ago I luckily acquired a number of **Little Lulus**. I asked my daughters if they cared to read them. They did. But there stacks of books, and they took **days** to read them all. Often during this period, I called them from only a few feet away to come and eat, or to run a quick errand.

They never heard me.



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GUEST *at the luncheon* INTERVIEW

PHIL SEULING: Joe Simon, you were the editor at Marvel Comics when 17-year-old Stan Lee came to work there, which means that between you two and Roy Thomas we have three generations of Marvel editors on this panel. That's quite true, isn't it, Joe? What was it like then?

JOE SIMON: Well, Stan was just telling me that the last time he left me, 1939, I was eating then, and nothing's changed. When Stan came to us, he was very eager, he wanted to do some writing, and I think he was still in high school, weren't you, Stan? Just graduated? Well, we gave him the text page to do because nobody ever read the text, even the editors! And Stan wrote his text, signed his name to it and we printed his name. He made it very important and he made everything important after that. And that's why he is where he's at, I guess.

STAN LEE: At the end of the table.

SIMON: At the end of the table.

(Laughter)

SEULING: Roy, you've seen a heck of a lot of writers and artists go through Marvel Comics. Who are the people who are with Marvel any longer that you still feel some vibrations from?

ROY THOMAS: Good or bad?

SEULING: Either . . . It's an open luncheon.

THOMAS: Well, it is a strange question. I've been working for Marvel for about nine years. And I think the people who have worked for Marvel that **I** think contributed the most and aren't there any longer, are the same ones that the readers would like—(since **I** was a reader of Marvel Comics). You know, people like Jack Kirby, certainly. Stan Lee—**he's** sort of not

there anymore as far as writing goes! I wish he were . . . I keep asking him to do the **Silver Surfer** but he doesn't have much time right now. Obviously, a guy like Steve Ditko that sort of wandered out the door and never came back!

Other people, that from time to time threatened to do something for us or had peripheral contact. You know, guys like Jim Steranko, and guys like Barry Smith.

Some people that I admire that have gone on to other places, like Berni Wrightson who did his first covers for Marvel, and a couple of stories, and we didn't have any work for him for a while and he went away mad. But it would be the same people probably that you would want working for Marvel. In other words, everybody in the business who's any good. We have a goodly percentage of them now. I wish we had those people and a few more.

SEULING: I was going to ask Roy a question just now, but I think it's fairly well established that Roy was a comics fan and a comics fanzine editor and that's been kind of played out. So I want to ask this question of Joe Simon. How much are **you** a fan of comic books?

SIMON: I'm afraid I haven't **read** a comic book in many years, but I do look at the pictures. The graphics are considerably improved over the early years and what they called the Golden Age. At that time we had less than a handful of really good artists—Lou Fine, of course Jack, and there were maybe three or four others, but today almost every artist is superb. I couldn't keep up with them today.

SEULING: Speaking about writing (just a moment ago) Roy said that some of the finest artists and writers are working for Marvel Comics right now. That's hard to contradict when you've just added to your work force a man who's written and drawn, oh, ten thousand pages or so—Frank Robbins, how do you like the Marvel style as you've found it so far?

FRANK ROBBINS: The Marvel method of working? Well, they have a different approach than I've been used to, in terms of the way they lay out the script in synopsis form and then you work the pictures and then add the words later. But it's very intriguing. I like it very much. It sort of gives you a visual challenge and you try to dramatize and imagine what the dialogue might or might not be. You get a pretty good picture of what you're doing as you go along, and it's very freewheeling, you know. I like it. It's a different way of handling things.

THOMAS: I'd just like to mention that we may be the first people, Marv Wolfman, Tony Isabella and I, ever to ask Frank Robbins if he can you draw any **faster**?

SIMON: I have something to say about that. I just met Frank last night for the first time, but I remember his work from when Kirby and I first started and Jack used to have Frank Robbins' work in front of him. He was influenced by this man here.

SEULING: There are so many ties in this business from one person to another, from one company to another. I think these luncheons have brought out many of these interwoven threads.

Stan, I'd like to ask **you** a question since you have a few of the people that you've worked with through the years here. When Roy first came to New York, and we met each other for the first time and we started talking, he said he would favor working with Marvel because of a flavor, or spirit, some certain characteristic about Marvel that at that time the fans really admired. Now, the question would be this: of

the people that you like to call Marvel people through the years, what would you say are the characteristics that they have in common?

LEE: The one common denominator is you have to be a little bit insane . . . and enthusiastic. I think maybe, if nothing else, the people at Marvel at our batty bullpen, as I cordially call it, are pretty enthusiastic. Almost every time that we sit and talk about something, Roy'll say "Hey, how about doing a magazine of this sort or that sort?" and I never can say no to him. His ideas are usually great, and we're always turning out more magazines than we really have enough artists and writers to produce. It's hard for us to turn **any** idea down, if we think it'll be good, and we love **our** ideas, so what usually happens is our biggest problem is always trying to go out and get better and better artists and writers. When a guy like **Frank Robbins** falls into our lap after lo, these many years, this is a great thing.

Just like when Roy Thomas fell into our lap; how many years ago was it, Roy? The greatest thing that ever happened to me, 'cause I had been doing most of the writing and editing myself and I kept thinking, gee, if I could only find **somebody** who'd be **dumb** enough to do all this work and let me have some time off and also **good** enough (I didn't know he'd end up being better, but that's okay). Anyway, I'd say the biggest thing at our place is the quest for **talent**. If Marvel is to any degree successful it's because we've always tried to have the **best** people working for us. And this can be considered as a want ad solicitation.

SEULING: Let me ask this of Joe. In the 1940's, let's say from '39 to '45, the war years, was it more of a business with a production line, or was there a camaraderie, fellowship, spirit that held people together in **those** days of the Marvel bullpen?

SIMON: I think the spirit that held us together was the spirit of nepotism. Almost everybody there was a member of the Godman family, and we were all good friends and we had a nice spirit about it. I was going to say to Stan that we love our ideas too, until we get the sales figures.

SEULING: I learned something this morning which will be one of the things I'll remember from this convention, and I think this audience would be interested in it. When you think of all the Joe Simon productions, when you think of **Boy Commandos, Young Allies, Captain America, Sandman, Boy Explorers, Stunt Man,** endless parades of excellent quality products, what was the most **profitable** book you ever worked on?

SIMON: Well, **Young Romance** and **Young Love** are by far the most profitable ventures! For over ten years, they sold two million copies a month and with high percentage figures. Of course, everybody was copying them, but there's something about the **first** titles. If they're pretty good, they'll outlast all the others, and nobody seemed to approach them in sales. **Young Romance** and **Young Love** were the leading magazines in sales in Hawaii, for instance, leading **Life** magazine and **everything** else!

SEULING: In other words, we talk about **Superman, Batman, Spiderman, Dr. Strange, Silver Surfer,** and it turns out that Dear Abby may outsell them all. That'll tell us where we are! We started out being

a super-hero fan convention, and I guess we're learning other things. If I remember right, Roy, wasn't the first thing that you did at Marvel . . . what super-hero was that? I think it was **Millie the Model**?

(Laughter)

THOMAS: I was Phil's guest on a Sunday evening at his place, and I had to go home and start writing that first one. It didn't turn out too well. It was such a strange book, it took me an issue to get the flavor, and it was the second one before I even understood what it was supposed to be! During the great blackout of 1965 Denny O'Neil, who was working at Marvel at the time, and I were on a subway trapped about two hours in the dark down there, so I didn't get a chance to write anything that night. And then the next day I got put onto **Sergeant Fury** and Denny O'Neil finished off that particular Millie story. And I lost that, just about the time I was beginning to master it, for easy money, anyway.

But anyway, Denny and I didn't get anything done. He had something he was supposed to do that night too, but when we got back to the office on Monday morning we found out that that night, Stan had gotten some sort of nine candle brigade out at his place with an old typewriter and done about ten pages of **Thor**! While we were sitting around a restaurant wondering, gee, why can't we get anything done in all this dark, he was out there work-

ing by candlelight and writing pages of some of the top **Thor** material, which was very depressing to us. You know, we thought we were pretty hardy young people at the time.

SEULING: I'm going to change the line of questioning. Both Joe and Frank fall into kind of a rarefied category—the writer/artist. I don't know which is more writer, which is more artist, in either man. And the question that occurred to me is this. Do you, when you read other people's work, recognize that this artist was a writer, or that he wasn't? Do the things that are collaborations between the strictly artist and the strictly writers . . . do they have a different flavor in your eyes?

SIMON: I think so. I think that the artist/writer is an ideal comic book producer and he can do things that a team can't do. In the old days, they didn't have scripts. When comics first started, there was no such thing as a script . . . everybody did his own complete job. In fact, when I first started in comics, I went to a package outfit called Funnies, Inc. and they were packaging the Goodman books and . . .

SEULING: Was Funnies, Inc. Bill Everett's . . . ?

SIMON: Bill worked there, right. It was run by someone named Lloyd Jacquet. And they just told me to give them six pages or seven pages. There was no character or anything. You know, just fill seven pages. And so we had to come up with a character or an idea and write it, draw it, letter it and turn it in. Then they'd send it over to some publisher and they'd use it. That was the beginning of comics.

SEULING: And you think that that's one of their strengths? The artist/writer kind of originated them?

SIMON: Well, I think some of the best things that were done, like Will Eisner's things, were in a class by themselves, I don't think they can be duplicated by a team.

SEULING: As one member of the most outstanding teams in the comics' history, this is an interesting statement.

SIMON: Well, when I say team, I mean a written script given to an artist to work from. When **we** worked we didn't use a script. We wrote it right on the board.

SEULING: Frank, do you see a difference in the collaborations and the single-man product?

ROBBINS: That's a difficult thing to answer in a way because, in many cases, if it's a perfect welding of the various elements and if you didn't see the credits, you'd find it very difficult (at least **I** would) to differentiate whether it's a one-man team, so to speak, or three-man team. But in other instances, of course, it's very desirable if someone can do his own writing, plotting, dramatization, visual and otherwise. It has a hell of a lot of advantages too. And yet, oddly enough, in the Marvel picture, I find it sort of intriguing to draw things which are going to surprise me by the dialogue that's going to come in later. So, I'm going to end up as a reader of something that I've already illustrated, even though the dramatization, the plot are all in my pictures. I assume the general idea is to suggest to the writer certain things to say, more so than if he hadn't had the pictures first. It's the reverse of what I've been used to. You learn to adapt to that to a certain extent.

THOMAS: All of us drew at one time or another. I remember Stan had mentioned how he used to win some drawing contests in New York newspapers until they asked him not to enter anymore, and I used to fool around with drawing a little bit. The thing is that while I think that a good person who is a writer and an artist can produce some very fine things and does have total control over the product (which both artists and writers would like to have), the collaboration thing works well with comics. One of the things that I have admired about comic books over all the years, **is** that it is a collaborative effort.

I keep reading articles about the one guy who is doing everything. These people believe Alex Raymond **wrote Flash Gordon** and he had help on that; Charlie Schultz may be one of the last people doing an entire strip. Everybody else has ten assistants.

One of the things that I like about comics is that there's a lot of credits. The next thing you know everybody's saying it's production mentality, production mentality. Think of the wonderful things done on **Captain Marvel** in the 40's. Then you look back there and discover it was produced by a shop where different guys drew different parts of the panel. Comics, be they strips or books, have always been a collaborative effort with certain rare exceptions. And it works both ways.

The only question is **what** two people or **what** one person you get. It may be Bill Everett doing the **Sub-Mariner** down to a very distinctive style of lettering, or it may be Al Feldstein or Harvey Kurtzman laying out an entire page and then giving it to an artist and saying, here, fill in the space between the panel borders. Obviously, both methods worked out quite well and they both produced some real classics of comic artwork and I think it's almost irrelevant to talk about a particular method being better . . . but it was a good question, Phil.

(Laughter)

SEULING: I've got a question now that's a knockout. This is going to surprise Stan. Stan Lee was the first guest at my first convention, and I remember what he said. I'm going to ask you how you feel about what you said then. He said that at that time he was looking forward to the day when comic books would have writers who were not just people who came to fill the pages with dialogue so that they could get the books out on the stands, but real writers who, if they didn't work in comic books, could earn their livelihood in other fields. What do you think about the current crop of writers, Stan? Did I quote you correctly?

LEE: I'm not really surprised, Phil. What I said earlier is that we are always looking for the best talent available. Now, years ago, in the early days, in the Joe Simon and early Stan Lee days of comics, there were tremendously talented people in the business, but unfortunately, one of the things that I think gave comics—I won't say a bad name, but it made them less respectable to some people than, let's say, movies or other things—was the fact that there were also people who were writing comic strips who weren't **really** writers. And even those who may have been reasonably good writers were very conscious of the fact that they were writing for little kids, so they didn't pay much attention, or **any** attention, to a writing style, to a literary style. They didn't worry about detail or even casual characterization. They just put a lot of words in. Probably the most profound philosophical concept in dialogue in those days was, if **Captain America** hit the Red Skull, the line was, "So, you want to play, huh?" That was really pretty deep dialogue. And I might add that I was as guilty of it as anyone else.

Well, today, sure we're looking for writers who can really write, who could write a movie or a novel or a television show or whatever (and I **don't** mean to say that movies, novels and television shows are in and of themselves better than comics) somebody who is not just able to write, "So, you want to play, huh?" . . . or . . . "Gee, who's that bug-eyed monster?" Stuff like that. We're lucky, we found such writers. I would say that virtually every writer working with Marvel is capable of writing in other fields. Certainly every artist illustrating in Marvel is good enough to be doing most any type of illustration. I think it's something that the field has needed; I think the calibre of the people in the field is something we can be proud of. There was this much talent years ago . . . there were people years ago who were as talented as they are today, but I don't think there were as many of them in proportion to the number of people in the field. Today, almost every pro in the field is really a most talented person, and I think that's a great improvement, and I think

that's one of the reasons that comics are so much more popular today than they ever were before.

SEULING: I listen to what you say, I listen to what Frank says, listen to what Joe says about the new writers and artists being so much better than they were when you remember them, that everybody has a great talent now whereas that was developed . . . I listen to what Roy says and I guess you all have to agree with me: **these** are the good old days . . . right?

* * *

SEULING: Not to break with tradition . . . we usually have questions from the floor.

QUESTION: Exactly how does a Marvel comic book story take shape?

LEE: Well, very basically, the editor will discuss the story with the writer first, making sure that the plot is what we want. Then the writer will discuss the story with the artist, just telling the artist what the plot is. The artist then goes home and pencils the story based on what the writer has indicated. Then the writer sees it for the first time illustrated and he puts the dialogue in, based on the artwork that he sees before him. So it really is quite a marriage of word and script and I think it's one of the reasons so many times in the Marvel stories that it does seem as though one person did **it,** because it isn't the schism where one person writes a script and then the artist just illustrates that script and he may not have a feeling for the script. Here the artist is really creating his own story, not following the script, just based on the general outline the writer gave him. Then the writer is doing the dialogue

based on the drawings that he's looking at, so I think we get a pretty good marriage that way.

QUESTION: In other words, the writer hasn't written the whole story. He's given the ideas to the artist and the artist works out the action. Then the writer takes it and looks at it and puts the final words in.

LEE: Roy, why don't you embellish that . . .

THOMAS: I should mention, of course, that Stan probably doesn't know this, but we don't work entirely that way anymore. (Laughter) Well, really it is with a number of artists and writers: this is the way that Stan works, the way that I worked and for the most part still do. Of course, I've written up to six, eight pages of single-spaced typed copy just for a synopsis for a story of say twenty pages in length, and that hasn't earned me a penny for script yet. Other writers may write a story almost page by page but still give the artist more freedom. It depends upon the relationship between the artist and the writer, the temperaments of the writer and the artist and so forth.

We do some finished scripts in advance occasionally, either for deadline reasons, or in certain areas like short stories, the six and eight page short stories that depend on a punch ending. Sometimes the writer wants to write those. So actually, now we work every single way.

The first time that I heard of what's now called the Marvel method was as a fan in 1963, when I was visiting my friend Jerry Bails in Detroit over Thanksgiving and he said, "You want to see a copy of a Stan Lee script?" I had seen some scripts by Gardner Fox and other people at National; ten or twelve page things, which means twenty pages of typed copy with endless rewriting by Julius Schwartz or whomever the editor was. And he says, here's a Marvel script and shows me a little thing. I think it was on two sides of one piece of typing paper. It had **everything** in there. It was **Fantastic Four** number eight or thereabouts, and the entire basic plotline was there. Then Jack Kirby added a lot with embellishment. But everything was there, you know. If you were asked to tell the story, you'd sit down and this is what you'd say in five minutes.

I was thinking, nobody can work this way. I mean, I **know** how you write a comic book script. I saw it in Joe Kubert's one dollar illustration book (which you may have seen around ten years before) I'd seen real scripts, and this is **not** the way you write a comic book script. I can't see how anybody could work this way. I didn't realize that two years later I'd be working that way myself. It still seems to me like a crazy way to work.

But I must confess, having written a very small handful of scripts in advance, that I very much prefer this way. I don't think it's any secret or any surprise that even strips done in other companies that have been particularly successful, say, when Len and Berni worked on **Swamp Thing,** they were often done in the Marvel method. As Stan said, it's a very organic thing and you get the best of both people. I'm glad that we are able to keep most of our scripts being done that way because I think it does affect the end product. I'm delighted that in my nine years there no other company has ever had enough sense to catch onto it!

QUESTION: Does Marvel Comics

employ any black writers?

THOMAS: There are no black writers working for Marvel. If there were, I wouldn't be telling you because I was playing it up one way or the other. I don't believe in that. The only reason is that I don't know of any black who has applied as a writer. Quite frankly, I have no recollection. There are a number of black artists, but no writer that I know of has ever applied. And that is absolutely the only reason why there aren't any.

QUESTION: How about women?

THOMAS: Women we have plenty of. There are not too many writing, I think, because not many of them write adventure books. But, of course, Jeannie Thomas has now been writing for several years. Linda Fite has written comics for us; Mary Skrenes who has also written for National is writing a few mystery stories and there are other people. Irene Vartanoff works as my assistant and may do a little bit of writing here and there—there are several other people. As an artist, of course, we have Marie Severin and we've had Ramona Fradon do a job or two. It is simply a matter of who walks in the door with samples and that's it.

I would not hire a person because he was a black writer or artist, and I wouldn't not hire a person because he wasn't black. I wouldn't hire a person because she was a woman or not because she was a woman. That's my idea of equal opportunity and I would be very happy to have anyone of any race, creed or color (as they always say). I don't think that that's really the kind of thing that affects anybody at Marvel. If it did, I'd want to get rid of them.

QUESTION: How much do you and the other two Marvel editors exercise control with respect to things like ways of censoring the artist in terms of what you feel individually an audience wants?

THOMAS: Control it, in a sense? Well, it gets harder. Luckily, most of the writers at Marvel, most of the artists too, for that matter, are people who have been Marvel fans. Therefore, they are pretty familiar with things and they don't deviate a terrible amount.

By the other two, I presume you mean Tony Isabella and Marv Wolfman who are editing some of the black and white books and who keep in careful and very close contact with me on the general thing that they're doing and we have very few problems. However, just because I've become so busy myself, there are other people, because Don McGregor and Dave Kraft in doing proof-reading, do a lot of editorial-type work. Gerry Conway will be helping me on a couple of black and white books: **Savage Tales** and the new science-fiction magazine which you saw advertised in **The Planet of the Apes,** since Gerry is a recognized science-fiction writer. And also, as some of you know from another panel, finally I had to admit, after several months, that it just was not going to become possible for me to keep on top of the color comics the way that I want to, the way that I have up until the last year, because there were too many. I needed someone who I could work with directly and who would keep everything going, who was basically 'simpatico' with, as I was with Marv and Tony. And so I think he'll be starting in the next week or so to work as Associate Editor in special charge of the color comics line, a guy you may have heard of, a "new" guy in the field named Len Wein.

QUESTION: This is for Roy or Stan or Joe. Is there any change in the language of comic books throughout the years?

THOMAS: Well, you can just look through the books, and see things with language or subject matter that would not have been allowed a few years ago. No great change, as long as the age level still has to be acceptable for children. That sets an automatic lid on it which otherwise would not be on it. That's in large part even self-imposed. We try to go as far as we can within the limits that are imposed on us. I've mentioned this many times, that I think that comic books like politics are the art of compromise. And a person who doesn't understand this usually doesn't last very long in the field or else he ends up doing work that may have a great appeal to an older readership but misses the younger readership; this has happened again and again. The real artisans of our field, the really valuable people are the people who can appeal to a broad spectrum of young and old readership. Now, that doesn't mean that's the only way to do it, but it's the only way you can do it in the particular kind of mass market that we have. And I think we've obviously managed to do that over the last decade or so. Any questions for somebody else on the panel?

QUESTION: This is for Stan. Are there any plans to have Spiderman made into a movie?

LEE: Yes, we're negotiating right now with Universal Films to do a full-length live-action feature film called **Spiderman**. There'll be announcements about it in the Bullpen Bulletin. I hope you're all interested and you keep reading our books to read the bulletin.

THOMAS: Can I ask you, Stan, would there be a certain amount of editorial control and creative control exercised by Marvel this time, as opposed to certain nameless cartoon shows in the past?

LEE: As a matter of fact, that's why it's taking so long to get this thing wrapped up, because we insisted on control and on the right to say what the story will be like and how much the film will be filmed. In fact, we went as far as to reach the point where I'll be named as Associate Producer, which is more an honorary title than anything else, but at least it will give me the authority to be involved with the film. And it may not be smart of me to say this because if you don't like the film, I'm going to have to take the blame, but if you do like it, it means that Marvel was in there again, right on top of everything.

QUESTION: Will Marvel's writers be writing it?

LEE: I don't know. I have a feeling that, yes, we may write the basic plot outline, but I'm sure that the screenplay will be written by an experienced screen writer.

QUESTION: Any idea who you want to star in it?

LEE: No, we haven't gotten that far yet. I have one thought I would love . . . there's a foreign director named Alain Resnais, whom I've known for a while, who did, if you remember, a movie **Last Year at Marienbad** and another, **Hiroshima, Mon Amour**. And he just did a film that was at the Cannes Film Festival called **Stavisky**. Now this fellow Resnais is one of the biggest fans of comic books in general and Marvel in particular. He loves **Spiderman** and I think it would be a real kick to have a fellow who does really artistic, respected, very cultural type movies, very aesthetic type stories, to have **him** do **Spiderman**. He's in Europe now. I'm trying to get hold of him and see if he would direct it. But aside from that (and **that** isn't definite) nobody's been slated yet as to who will be in the movie.

QUESTION: Stan, can you tell us if you will return to writing? And will there be any more **Spiderman** albums?

LEE: I wish I could say yes, because I love to write, but I don't think so, not in the near future, because I really don't have the time. As far as records and things like that, Marvel has never been the best-run business entity in the world; I think we've always been kind of good creatively, at least I hope so. And we're always so busy working on the stories and fighting among ourselves as to who's going to draw what, what books we'll put out . . . there's never been anybody minding the store insofar as merchandising and licensing and publicity. Other people **always** beat us at that.

Just recently, we hired one or two people who are going to be in charge of working closely with manufacturers and people in the outside world who want to involve themselves with Marvel. There have always been people like that. They never knew whom to contact. So I think I can say that from now on there will be many more record albums, books, toys, games, T-shirts, you name it . . . Marvel products. Save your money—there's going to be a lot of them.
(Laughter)

QUESTION: At Marvel in the 1950's you were batting out hundreds of monster stories. Were you the only writer or were there other writers?

LEE: We had a few others. I guess this was before Roy's time, just before he came in. I had a brother Larry who was doing some of them and well, Roy's got a better memory

than I do, even though he wasn't there then. Do you know who else?

THOMAS: It'll come out in the origins books that is coming out in September that anything that wasn't signed by Stan was obviously never written by him. Stan discovered that when he was doing research for the book that in the early 60's (which is just a few years after this) that while he plotted, he had not actually dialogued the very first **Thor** even. That had been done by Larry. But Larry and some of the other writers never felt very much like signing the material. There are names on the early 60's stories—two or three people, quite often pseudonyms for people who were just moonlighting from other companies that wrote a few stories, but nobody that did very much.

LEE: Basically, I wrote most of them. And speaking of that book, it's kind of funny. Simon and Schuster published this book, **The Origins of Marvel Comics,** and we're going to have the origin story reprinted in full of the **Hulk, Fantastic Four, Spiderman,** and many others. And they asked me if I'd write the introduction to each chapter because I had written all the stories, and I said sure, glad to do it, and I wrote lengthy introductions for each one of these. When I got to **Thor,** and this shows you my memory, I happened to look at the first page of the artwork and I saw it said script by Larry Leiber. So I said, well, gee, I thought **I** wrote this. So I called Larry and he said, "No, you gave me the plot but I wrote it, don't you remember? You were too busy." You know I'm not a guy who likes to talk about other people, and I find I had to devote almost a whole chapter on **somebody else** instead of **me** and that really . . . (laughter)

THOMAS: To show you how good Stan's memory really is, it didn't say Larry Leiber on the first page. Those of you like myself who bought that on the newsstand know that there weren't **any** credits at all. The way Stan actually discovered it was there weren't any credits and by that time he signed everything that he wrote. The fact, Stan, that your name wasn't on it (but Jack's might have been) was internal evidence that probably you hadn't done it. Of course, the logical choice was Larry. Jeannie would like to ask a question of Joe Simon, so I'll duck out for just a second, please.

JEAN THOMAS: Joe, I'd like to know what you would think about creating a character such as **Captain America** today? How would you make a **Captain America** relevant to 1974? Would he wear red, white and blue?

SIMON: Well, I just read somewhere that in analyzing **Captain America** that he is really a fascist . . . and he has all the ways of a Nazi Superman. Did you read that, Stan? So I guess I would try to do something with him more on the free-thinker style. I don't think it would be a super-type hero. It would be more like Thoreau. Well, it's a camp thing now, isn't it, the red, white and blue? But the uniform's valuable, isn't it, Stan?

LEE: I never knew how important uniforms were until we brought out the first **Fantastic Four,** and I thought we were being so clever by not giving them costumes. Boy, we got an avalanche of mail saying we love the book but we'll never buy it again unless you put them in their

little long underwear suits. I gotta mention one thing, talking about Joe Simon. When I first started there, I think I was still wearing short pants and playing with a yo-yo, and I walked in and there was the whole staff . . . which consisted of Joe Simon, hiding behind the biggest cigar anybody ever saw, and Jack Kirby. But for the first three weeks I only saw the top of his head, 'cause he was always crouched over the drawing board while Joe was giving him orders that Jack never particularly listened to. (laughter)

SIMON: That's what you think.

LEE: And, it didn't matter because Joe changed everything he did, anyhow. And Jack used to smoke, I think, Joe's left-over cigars, or cast-offs. Jack had to smoke a little smaller cigar than Joe. And this was the mighty Timely staff for quite a while, while I worked there. I didn't see too much of them, 'cause they had me running out to buy lunch and coffee and stuff . . . when I wasn't screwing up the place.

But I gotta tell you that they were two great guys to work for and for many years, Joe was really my idol because he came up with more ideas and he really **knew** this business. I never knew for years . . . I'd look at a drawing or a page they had done . . . I never knew wheter Joe gave Jack the idea, and Jack drew it, or Jack gave Joe the idea and Joe had Jack draw it, or Joe drew it first and Jack copied it. I sometimes suspect that they didn't know, but that was a real good example of two guys . . .

SIMON: Usually we stole the idea. (laughter)

LEE: I'd like to say from **me** . . . but they didn't, because I was just learning at the time.

SEULING: I'd like to answer Jean's question, although I have nothing to do with the concept of **Captain**

America, but I have an involvement in **Captain America**. I told you I was living through it; I was growing up with Captain America; I was six years old when he first appeared and by the time he had been formed and made his dynamic debut and had been established by Simon and Kirby, well, I was reading him avidly. I mean, as you read comics, I'm sure you've had the same experience.

To this day, there's a dichotomy within me and I don't even try to resolve it, I make no apologies to anybody. **Captain America** stood up tall and I stood up tall. He hated the fascists and I hated the fascists. He knew where the enemy was and I did too. If he saw a spy, he'd beat the hell out of them; well, if I were big enough and I saw a spy I'd beat the hell out of him too. If they gave me a red, white and blue suit to wear, you're damned right I'd wear it and I'd wave the flag and I'd salute the flag and I got tears in my eyes in parades. It was a patriotic time. A country of one mind was at war. There were no pacifists. There had been in 1937 and 1938, but there were no more. We had been attacked, there was a unified effort to destroy the country and we were protecting ourselves. And there was something . . . maybe righteous is a bad word to use . . . there was **something** we felt. There were some things that we wanted to protect. The flag may now be used for people

to hide behind and beat up black people because "they ain't really Americans" and stuff like that (and I think that a cop who wears a flag in his lapel for right-wing law-and-order identification ought to be beaten over the head with his own nightstick) but at the same time, I catch a glimpse of the flag against a pale blue sky and it's exciting! And I don't think that patriotism has to mean let's beat the hell out of all the other countries because they're inferior. I think that maybe, instead of patriotism being an atavism, maybe we can redefine it. I consider myself a liberal and I love the United States, and I don't think that **Captain America** is a fascist and I don't feel called upon to **defend** my liking for the flag, **Captain America,** the United States, free-thinking, or liberalism.

QUESTION: I'd like to know, Stan and Joe, what you thought about the Republic serial about **Captain America.**

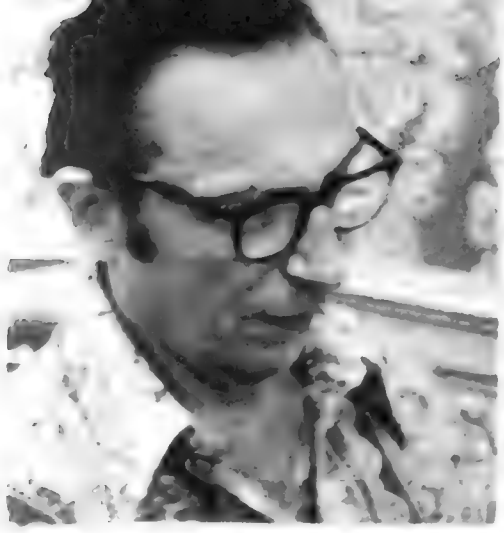
SEULING: It wasn't. It was **Captain Africa** and they decided to capitalize on **Captain America** so they pinned an A . . . no, they already had an A on him. They made him **Captain America** without a shield, without stripes, without wings on his head, without a sidekick, . . . and he used a gun. That's all I know about it.

THOMAS: I don't think it was really **Captain Africa.** It was obviously designed to be an original character, a separate serial with a guy who put on a mask and ran around with a gun, just like there was a **Black Commando** and the **Secret Code** serial later. At the last minute, somebody thought why don't we just attach this to a character that already exists, especially in the light of **Batman** serials going around at that time, so they bought the rights to it, they slapped together a costume, you know, with no shield, no wings, no Bucky, a different identity (must have spent like fifteen minutes working on the whole thing) called it **Captain America** and it's really kind of a shame in a way that the serial, while it might have some good action could have been a really fine serial with Captain America.

QUESTION: With the proliferation of Marvel comic books, errors seem to be more and more common. I know you're doing your best, but how will you handle this?

THOMAS: Well, I mentioned yesterday that in many ways, I wished we were a little smaller, but that's one of these things. You just grow and it's hard to resist the temptation to do what you can. What I've done is get other people for whom I have a great deal of respect, other writers, maybe some artists in there, and in the last few months when it became apparent that it was just impossible for guys like Don McGregor and so forth proof-reading something at the last minute to catch something, and since John Romita and I are too busy at the other end, the only thing we could do was to get someone else. So I got Len Wein who probably knows what has happened in every Marvel comic as thoroughly as say I did when I came into the field nine years ago and much more so than I would now.

I wanted to get somebody with two qualifications: I needed for this a guy who was an absolute expert on Marvel trivia and I mean down to the various details. At the same time somebody who was a top-flight writer, a person who would understand the story lines and what ought to be drawn, what ought to be written. There aren't too many choices in the field to get that kind



of person, so I went to Len and hired him and I think that at next year's convention, if these mistakes still abound, I want you to throw things at him.

QUESTION: How can someone become a writer for Marvel?

SEULING: Roy had to pass a test, I remember.

THOMAS: I really don't know. It's so much harder now. I can look, Stan can look at artwork but you can't tell what it's going to be a year from now. I think back to samples I've seen by Barry Smith, Jim Starlin and other people who have come in and what they were doing six months or a year later. I think we can maybe recognize the germ. It's much harder to recognize writing and quite frankly, I don't have a good answer for it. We try to go through a kind of a slush pile of unsolicited scripts. It takes a long time. Tony Isabella works particularly hard at this and has found one or two. I think that the best way to do it, because he gets around to it sooner or later, would be to send in an idea for a mystery story to our magazines. This eventually winds up on Tony Isabella's desk and he tries to go through it in what little spare time he has. I read some occasionally, Marv often does, Len will probably be helping out in some little bit. The problem is it's very, very hard. Among people who've flunked writers tests (or not **flunked** it but have sent in work and not got any direct response) are who? Steve Englehart? Tony Isabella? And quite a few other people that are now working there full time. So it's a very haphazard kind of thing. Maybe the best way is to do what Gerry Conway did years ago. I think Gerry Conway must have sent in hundreds of pages of scripts and synopses to practically everybody in the field—Marvel, National, everywhere, until finally, eventually, somebody recognized, because the talent was there, that something could be done with this. Other people can send endless numbers of scripts and we do have people that send a script virtually every week and we know it's never going to work out. We try to politely tell them so, but even there we might be wrong. There isn't any good solution because you simply cannot look at a page of writing on the average and tell, unless a person is there already, and very few people are going to be there right away. Just send in some synopses, I guess.

SEULING: I remember Otto Binder's words at another convention . . . He said that when he came to New York to break into the very profitable comic book field, he wrote twenty or thirty scripts, all of which were rejected. Then he sold his first **and** within a month, all the twenty or thirty that he hadn't sold before . . . so that might be an encouragement to keep you going.

(END)

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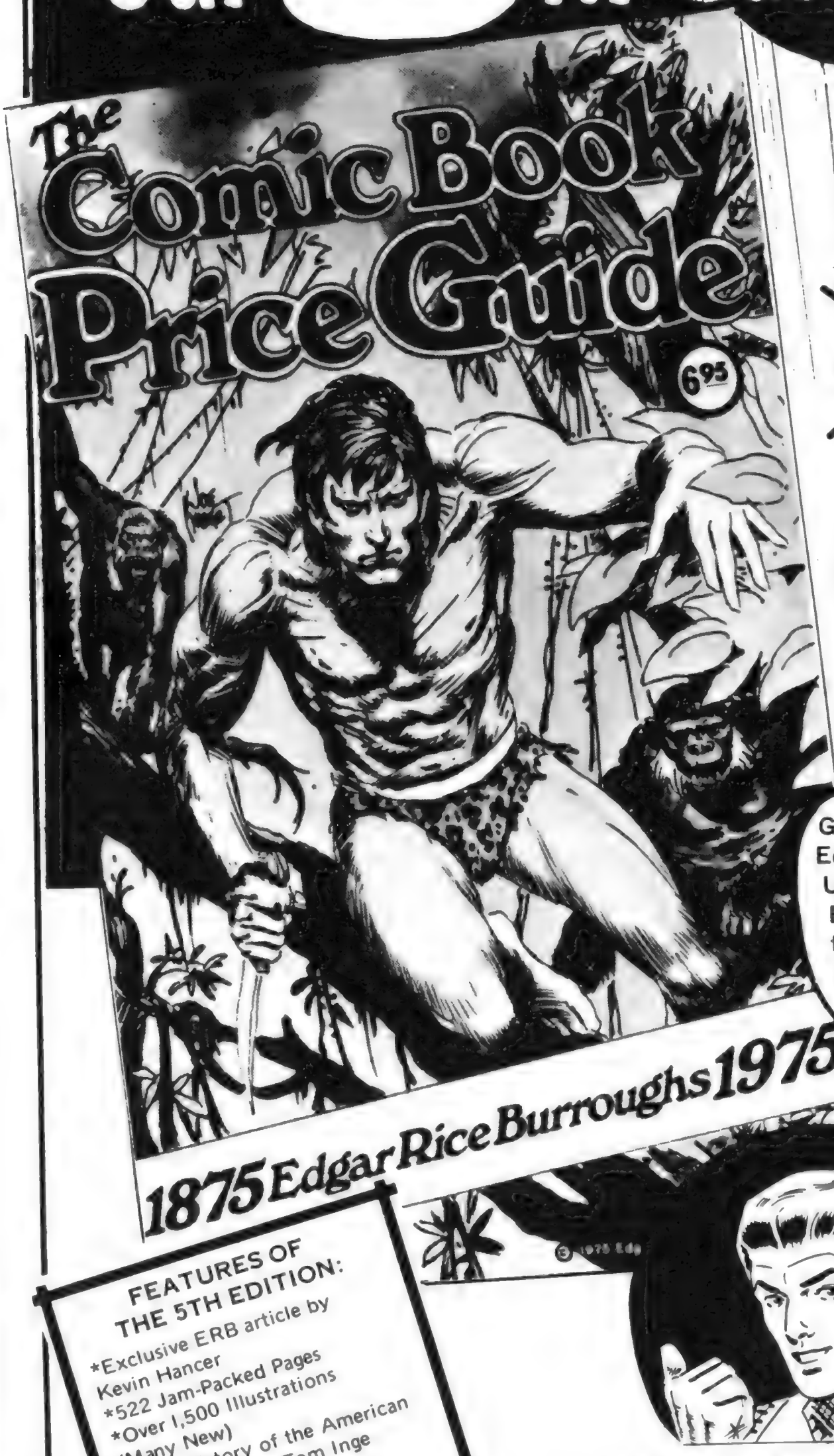

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the 20 year decade

the 1950's

BY ROY THOMAS

It was as they say, the **best** of times . . . the **worst** of times.

The decade began for me with a special bargain subscription to **ALL-STAR COMICS,** twelve bimonthly issues for a dollar, of which I received one issue (#57, dated Feb.-March 1951)—followed by eleven decidedly unwanted numbers of **ALL-STAR WESTERN** featuring the Trigger Twins and company.

The decade **ended,** though, with the revival of FLASH COMICS (or THE FLASH, as it was rechristened with #105), the resurgence of the Green Lantern, and the imminent (if not inevitable) creation of the Justice League of America.

In between those two extremes fell not a Golden Age or a Silver Age or even quite a Gilded Age, but the Middle Ages of Comics.

In **some** ways it was a Golden Age, one supposes. Beyond doubt the E.C. Comics, despite their indefensible excesses (and the even more unpardonable sins of many of their imitators, long since forgotten), produced some of the best art and quasi-literature the field has seen. Kurtzman's **Mad** took a full five issues to clue me in on exactly what it was trying to do; "Superduperman" eluded me the first time through, but "The Black an' Blue Hawks" was a revelation of sorts so that I quickly acquired the four back issues from E.C. itself and never missed an issue—not even for several years after it went high-hat with type, zipatone, and no color.

And there was Carl Barks, of course. A name unknown to me at the time; I didn't even think of him as "the good artist" (let alone "the good **writer**") as so many seem to have done. I just kept buying UNCLE SCROOGE and DONALD DUCK all the while and revelling in trips to Spanish California and Scrooge's money-bin. Man, but that guy Disney could draw fast!

Walt Kelly's POGO for Dell was a joy, too, even if it was done (was it?) by a talented ghost for a less sophisticated audience than the fabulous newspaper strip.

Fact is, despite the eventua

coming of the Comics Code and the supposed grass-roots movement (which was flamed into a grass **fire** by the likes of Fredrick Wertham, whether consciously or no), I suppose I'd have survived the decade pretty well comicwise, if only I'd not been, in those days, mostly a superhero fan.

But alas, to see the final, undeniable, and ignominous end of the Justice Society, so that it looked as if Flash, Hawkman, Atom, and the whole lot were gone for good—to have seen the gradual decline of Plastic Man into a semi-reprint book—the takeover of Blackhawk by D.C. and the horrors that followed—the sudden and (for me as much as for Beck and Binder) totally unexpected disappearance of Captain Marvel and Family, who turned out to be only mighty **mortals** after all—the glorious but depressingly short-lived return of Cap, Subby, and the Torch—a few feinting stabs at characters with names like Marvel Boy, Black Cobra, and Captain Comet—or Crimebuster become Chuck Chandler, trading his cape for collegiate status and oblivion—

—ah, those were definitely **not** the days!

It's hard to recall, really, that all those horrible things took place in only a few short years, the first half of the 50's—so that, by mid-1956, the Flash was back (albeit for one issue only, and wearing hand-me-down long-johns from the late lamented Captain Marvel) and some clowns called the Challengers of the Unknown were starting to gain my attention, due largely to frenzied, beautiful artwork by Jack Kirby.

And, when I walked into a drugstore one night in 1959 and beheld a new, only-slight-drab rendition of Green Lantern staring out at me from amid the **Archies** and the **Bat-Mites,** I knew that we were out of the woods.

The 1950's. Not really so bad, not even comicwise, as I look back at them. At least one step forward for every step or so backward. And, if comics would never be, **could** never be quite the same again in the Age of Television, at least they were still around to provide one of the earliest instances of a true Counterculture.

The 1950's. No, not really **quite** so bad.

If only they hadn't seemed to last for **20 years!**

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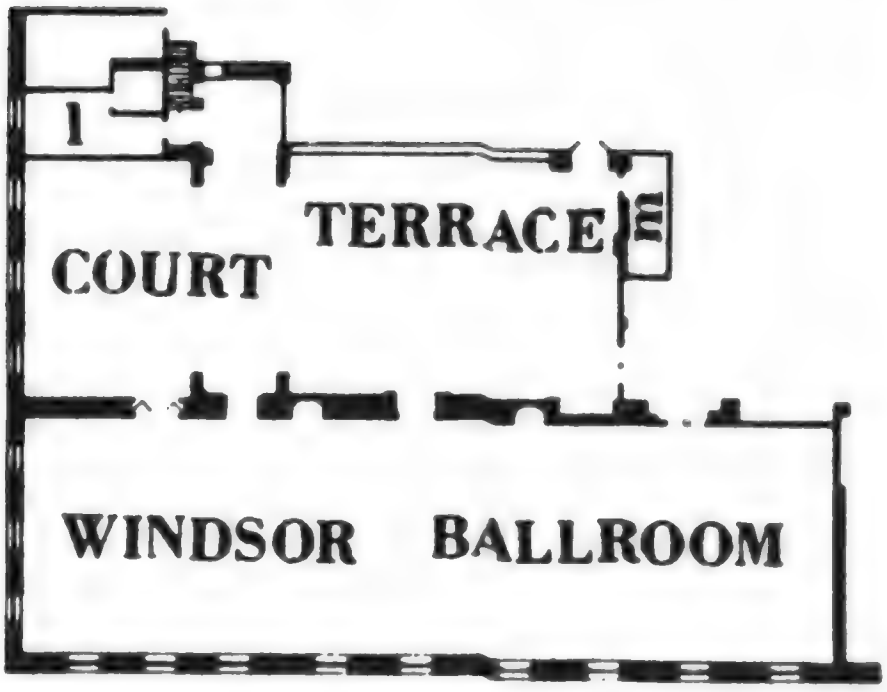

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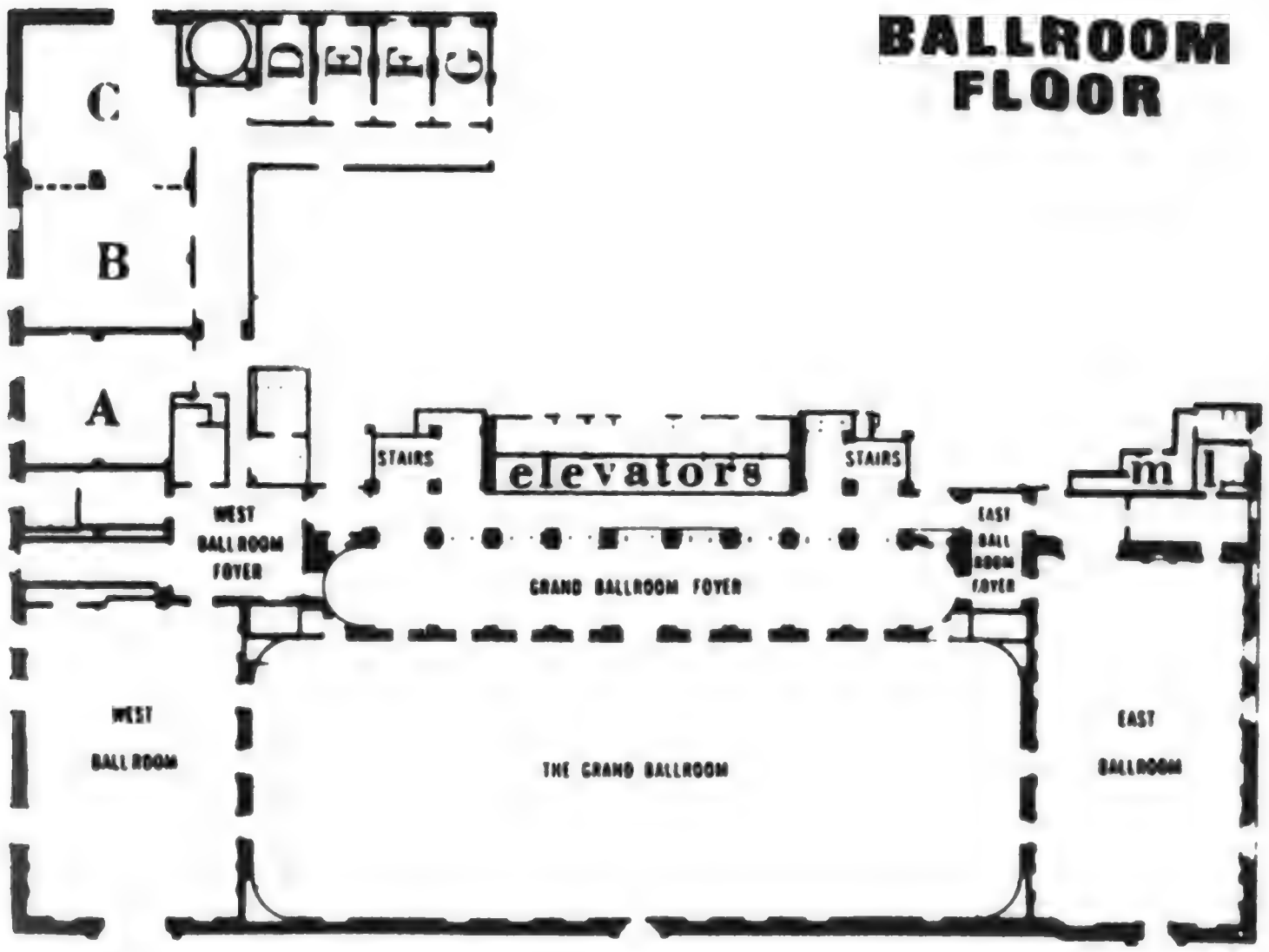

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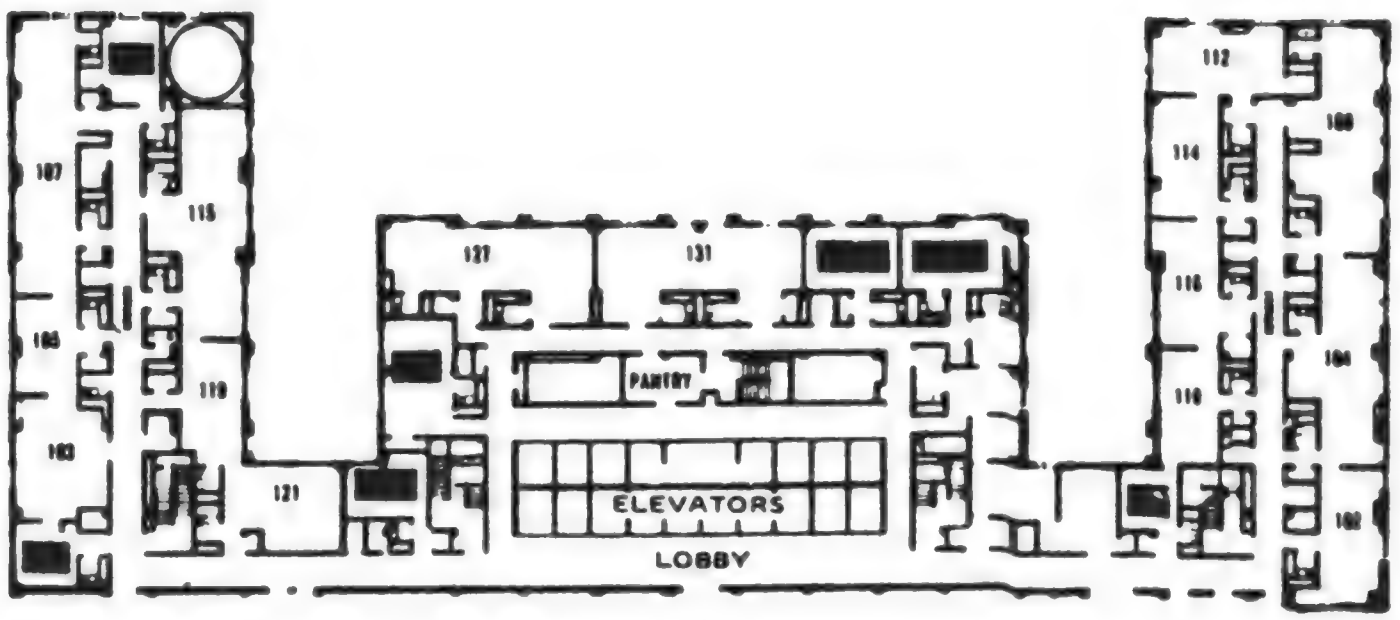

THE MARVEL
IS JUST

XPLOSION
GINNING!

the renais

by Carl Gafford and Paul Levitz

"And if I catch you smuggling **one more comic** into the house, you're going to get it!" For most of the sixties, those were the words to cower by, for it was the sixties collectors who got hit by two great waves of expansion of the field, and the birth of the back issues market.

Talking to some younger fans, it's hard to get across what it was like seeing **THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #1** hit the stands and wonder if it was worth the 12¢ . . . that being the established comic price throughout most of the sixties. Although memories still linger of going to the neighborhood candy store to buy two 10¢ comics and a pack of gum for a quarter. The 80-page DC Annuals seemed like exhorbitant treasures far beyond the means of mortal men.

The first expansion wave hit full blast as the decade opened, with DC coming out with their new super-hero titles reviving the characters from the forties: **JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA** and **GREEN LANTERN** in 1960, followed by **HAWKMAN, THE ATOM, AQUAMAN**, and all the rest. Some of the heroes collected fanatical cults, especially **HAWKMAN**. When his fans weren't arguing about the correct headpiece for the character, they would have screaming fights about whether Joe Kubert or Murphy Anderson was the best artist for the book. It was a miracle that they found the time to write the DC editors and beg for **HAWKMAN's** own magazine.

But the real attraction of the expansion was the new companies and all new titles. August of 1961 saw a very strange title hit the stands, and more than one fan thought the **FANTASTIC FOUR** was a silly looking group and didn't pay much attention to them until their third issue, when they received costumes.

There was one other thing about that third issue of **FANTASTIC FOUR**. At the end of the story there was a tagline announcing a surprise guest-star in the next issue. Well, when #4 came out, one nameless sixties fan looked through the issue time and again searching for the guest-star—only to come up empty handed! All he found was this villain, **SUB-MARINER**! Maybe the **whale** was the guest-star!

Then there was the peculiarity that all the early Marvels shared—the Red Commie Menace that Stan had all his heroes fight for about the first three years of the Marvel line. Funny . . . never could find "Red China" on grandma's globe!

DC and Marvel were hardly the only comics companies pushing into the super-hero field in the early Sixties. Not by a twelve-cent long shot! Archie Comics inaugerated an Adventure Series featuring two titles form the Simon & Kirby shop: **THE DOUBLE LIFE OF PRIVATE STRONG** (with the **SHIELD**), and

ance fan the 1960's

THE ADVENTURES OF THE FLY. But the biggest kick our nameless fans got from these was rubbing his CrackerJack plastic "fly" ring and transforming himself into **THE FLY**.

Ahem . . . enter nameless fan #2, who stayed out of the first half of this article because he was too young to go to the newsstand in those days. But he entered the scene at just the right time—by buying **JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA** #21 and getting introduced to 23 heroes at once. No wonder he ended up a **LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES** fan!

By this time the field was booming. No fan could possibly afford all the new comics—or afford to let his parents know that he was buying as many as he really was. "Stop reading that trash!" resounded through thousands of American households, and the hard days of rationing came upon the face of the land. No, not paper rationing—that was in the Forties. (If you're going to appreciate an article like this you have to keep your decades straight!) This was the era of parent rationing!

"Two comics a week is it! I won't have you filling my house up with that trash—read real books instead!"

"But—"

"No buts—or I rip up the rest of your dirty old comics!"

And so it went . . . with comics being smuggled into the house under teenager's shirts . . . lunch money going for the inedible Hulk . . . and real joy at being issued a textbook large enough to hide a 6" by 9" comic!

It got worse as the decade went on. 1967 saw the rise of the Charlton super-hero line under Dick Giordano, and the birth of the short-lived Tower Comics group. Both of these had faded by the following year, but then DC and Marvel both suddenly seemed to double their lines in simultaneous bursts of creativity. And fans drowned in their good fortune.

Of course by then any fan who had seen the beginning of the decade had discovered a secret so astounding that it gave them the power to buy all the comics they wanted—without having to smuggle anything! It was a magic word as mighty as Billy Batson's cry of **"SHAZAM!"**, which that group was too young to remember anyway! And the shout was heard throughout the land—"Allowance!"

The luckier fans had found another secret—buying old comics! There were a few bookstores that actually held on to their raggedy copies, so these lucky lads could finally read the second half of that two-part story they had begun a year ago! But the outrageous prices—some stores even charged 5¢ for a used copy of a book that might have seen a decade's worth of wear and tear—and who would think of paying that for **FANTASTIC FOUR #1?**

PHIL SEULING

BOX 177 CONEY ISLAND STATION BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11224

This is Phil
...who is a
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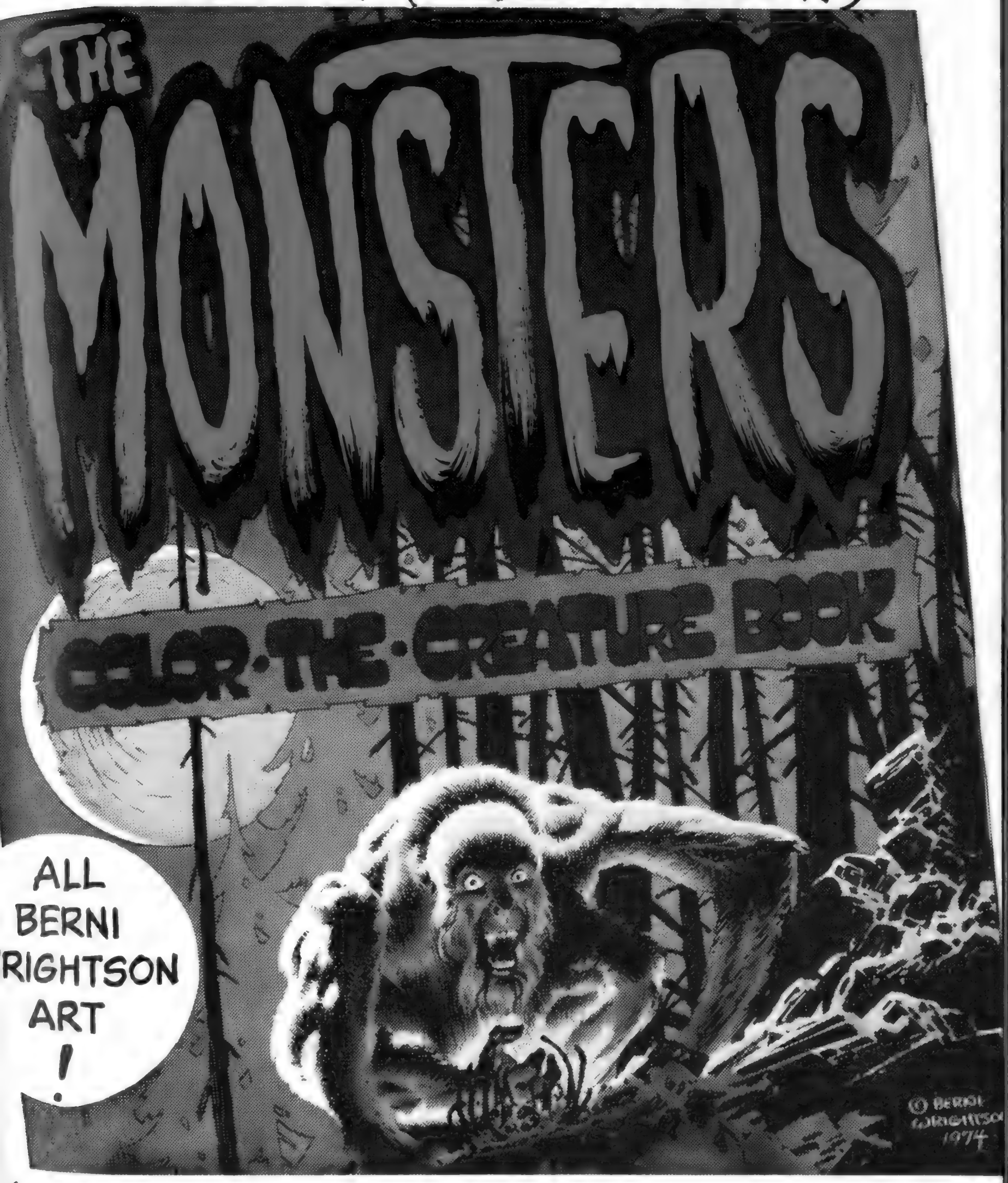

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Women in Comics!

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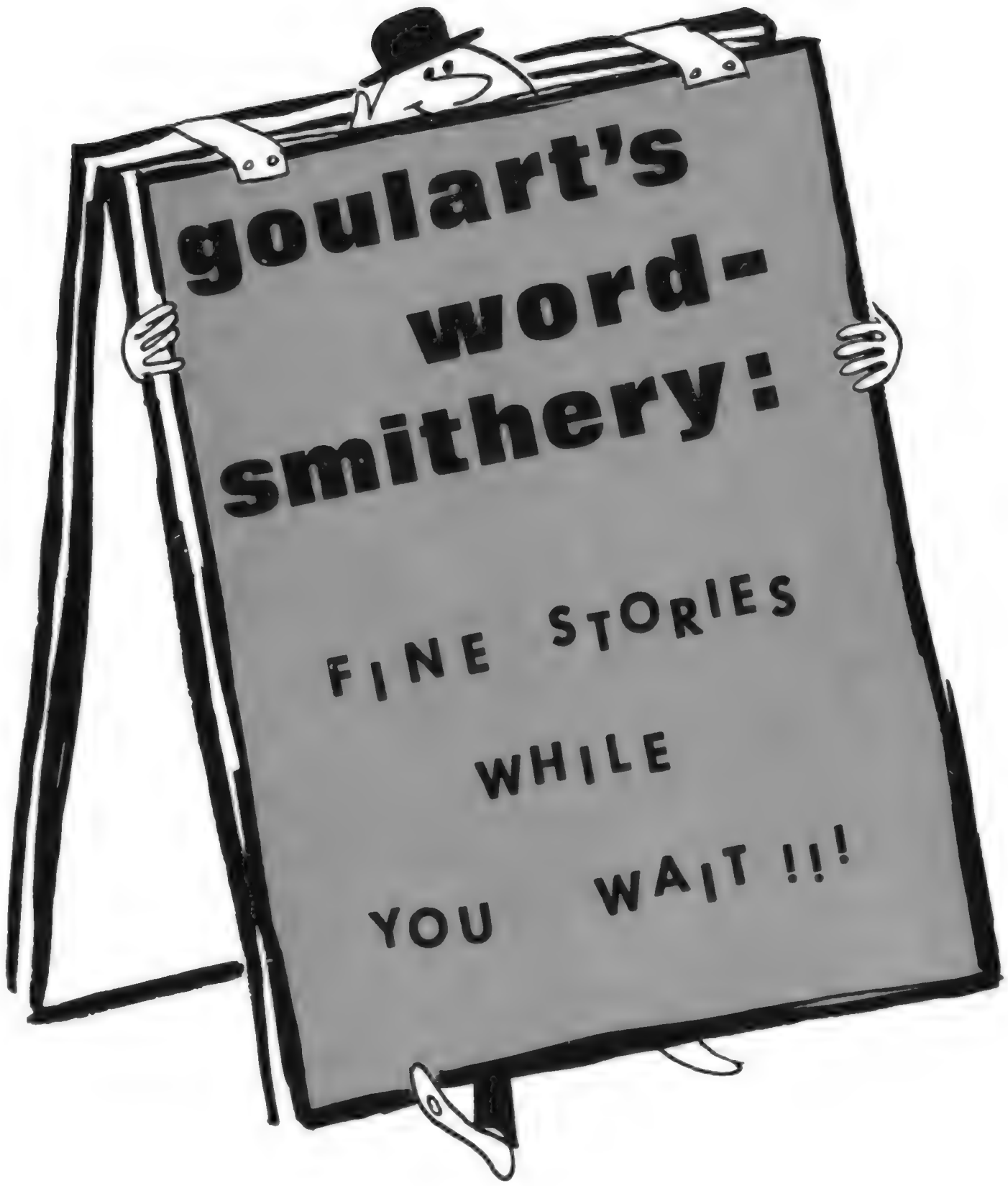

by J. Randolph Cox

The man with the winged typewriter paused in mid-story.

"Aren't you Frank Shawn?" I asked.

"Yes," he admitted. "I'm also Con Steffanson, part of Howard Lee, and Kenneth Robeson III, but you can call me Ron Goulart. It's my real name."

The creator of John Easy and Max Kearny quickly slipped a fresh sheet of bond into his machine and began another yarn.

"They tell me I write a lot of California life-style into my stories. It must be so, because I was born there. I live in Connecticut now." A dozen quick raps to the keys and he looked up.

"Why do you write such short sentences?" I asked, looking at his copy.

"Force of habit, I guess. I used to be in advertising. Besides, they're not short, they're concise. There is a difference." The fingers returned to the keys. It looked easy.

"It isn't. The light touch to my stories is deceptive. I'm really a very serious fellow." An eyebrow twitched. Was I being kidded? Still, 20 science-fiction novels, a dozen Avenger thrillers, half a dozen collections of short stories (only a fraction of the 100-plus published in magazines like **Show, Playboy, Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine,**

and the **Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction**), and collectors-only-know how much else, all this meant serious effort. Only the content was humorous.

A staccato burst from the typewriter. "It isn't all Cheap Thrills and Hardboiled Dicks, I'll have you know. It's work and it was nice to win that Edgar Allen Poe award for **After Things Fell Apart.** I was also on the board of directors of the Mystery Writers of America at one time and am a former vice-president of the Science Fiction Writers of America." Another burst from the machine.

"But what about comics?" I asked. "After all, this **is** the . . . "

A hush fell, a grin spread across his face, and his eyes began to glow.

"That is another story. I've been a fan for years. I always wanted to be either a writer or a cartoonist. I put together some material for **Mad** and **Cracked** a number of years back. They bought the scripts, but had someone else do the drawings." (Did I hear a sigh?) "After that, I knew I was a writer."

In more recent years, he had a brief, but memorable, period of writing for Marvel. A couple of **Warlock** scripts, some adaptations of the classics for **Supernatural Thrillers,** and some Lovecraft and Bloch for **Journey Into Mystery.** A neighbor named Gil Kane drew him into that episode in his career. Further back in Goulart's mysterious past, he admitted doing teenage adventure fillers for **Ponytail** comics.

"But you've done paperback novelizations too haven't you?"

"Yes, I did some of The Phantom books and the first three Flash Gordons for Avon, and I recently wrote a novel for Warner Paperback called **The Tremendous Adventures of Bernie Wine.** It's about this cartoonist with a big New York comic book company. The final scene takes place at a certain July comic convention presided over by a large, beefy fellow named Lloyd Babboon. Purely imaginary, I assure you." His fingers slid lightly over the keys. I looked again at what he was writing.

"Isn't that a Vampirella story?"

"Yes, it's for this new paperback series about a girl who doesn't wear many clothes."

"The result of inflation, no doubt. What about this **Adventure Decade** book?"

"The **correct** title is **The Adventurous Decade: Comic Strips in the '30s**!" I cringed, corrected. Of course! The first in-depth look at a particular category in comics instead of the usual scatter-gun approach to the total field. No scissors and paste job of research, Goulart had gone to the sources and interviewed the pace-setters and pioneers: Roy Crane, Milton Caniff, Noel Sickles, Coulton Waaugh, Leslie Turner, and dozens more. He studied their work in long runs of the strips. He only discusses the strips he's actually seen. A very personal book, it doesn't slight the lesser-known strips either, the ones which ran in only a few papers, but were every bit as entertaining as the famous ones.

"It sounds like a professional labor of love."

He smiled modestly. The wings on the type-writer unfolded and he was gone.

Our Very Special Guest

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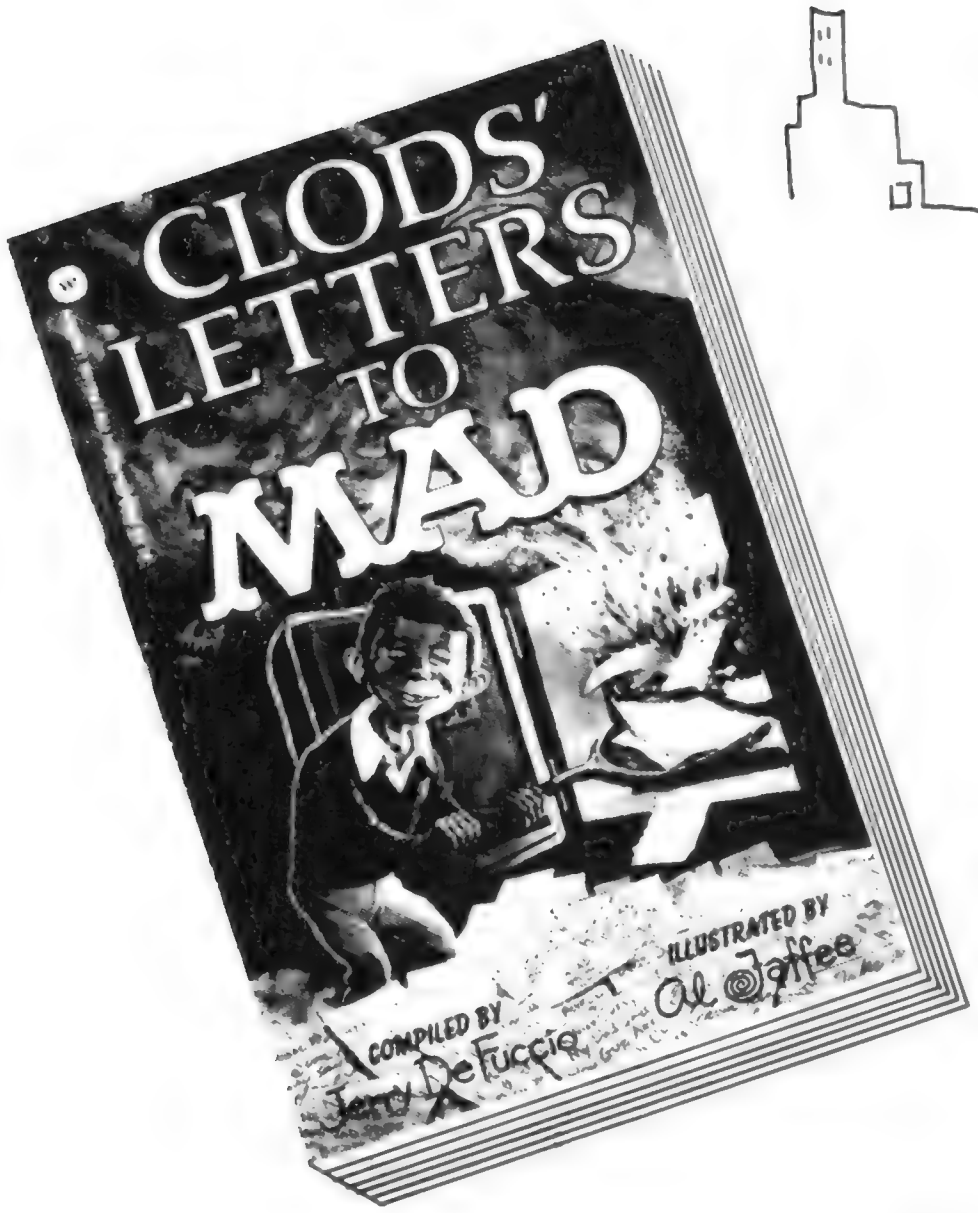
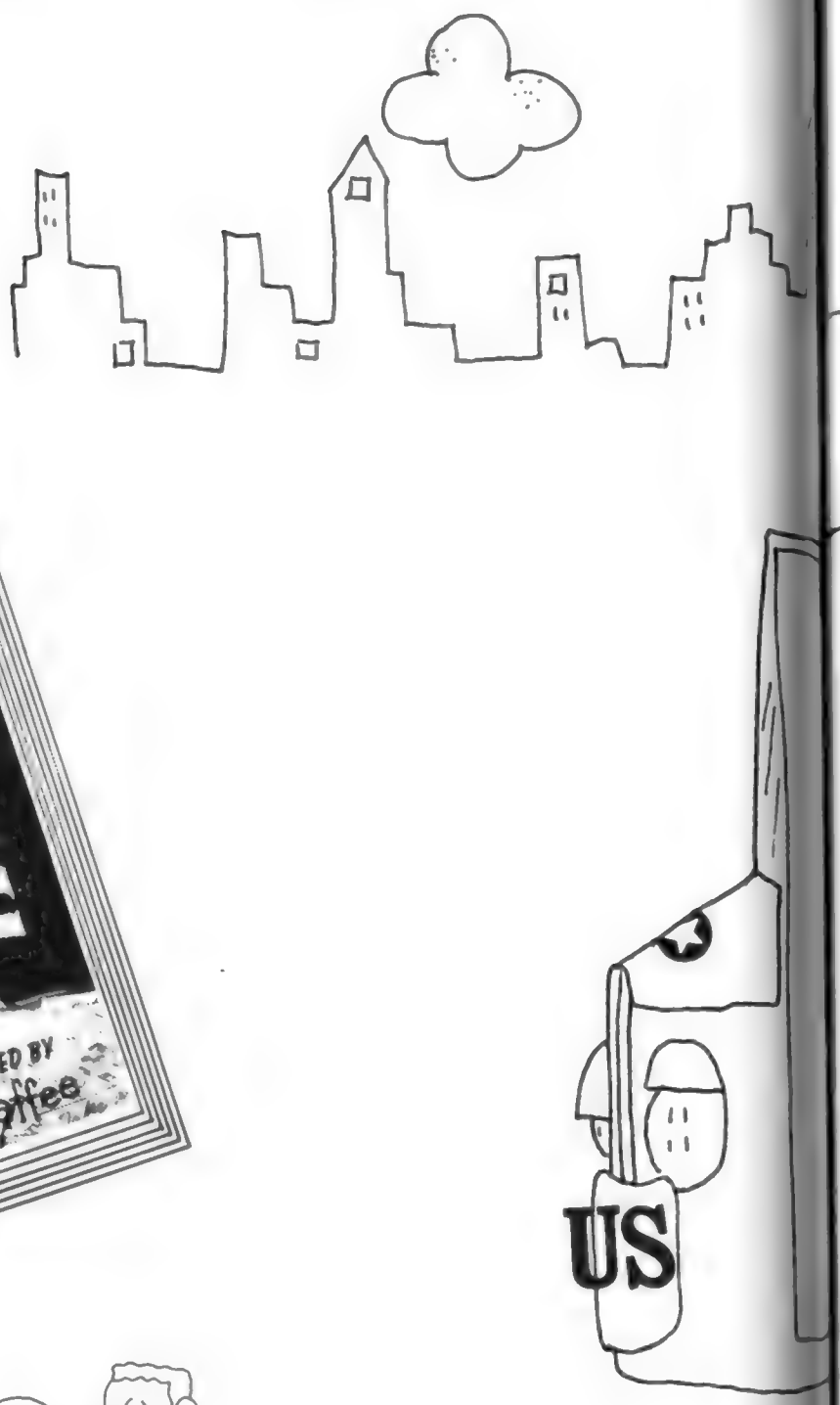
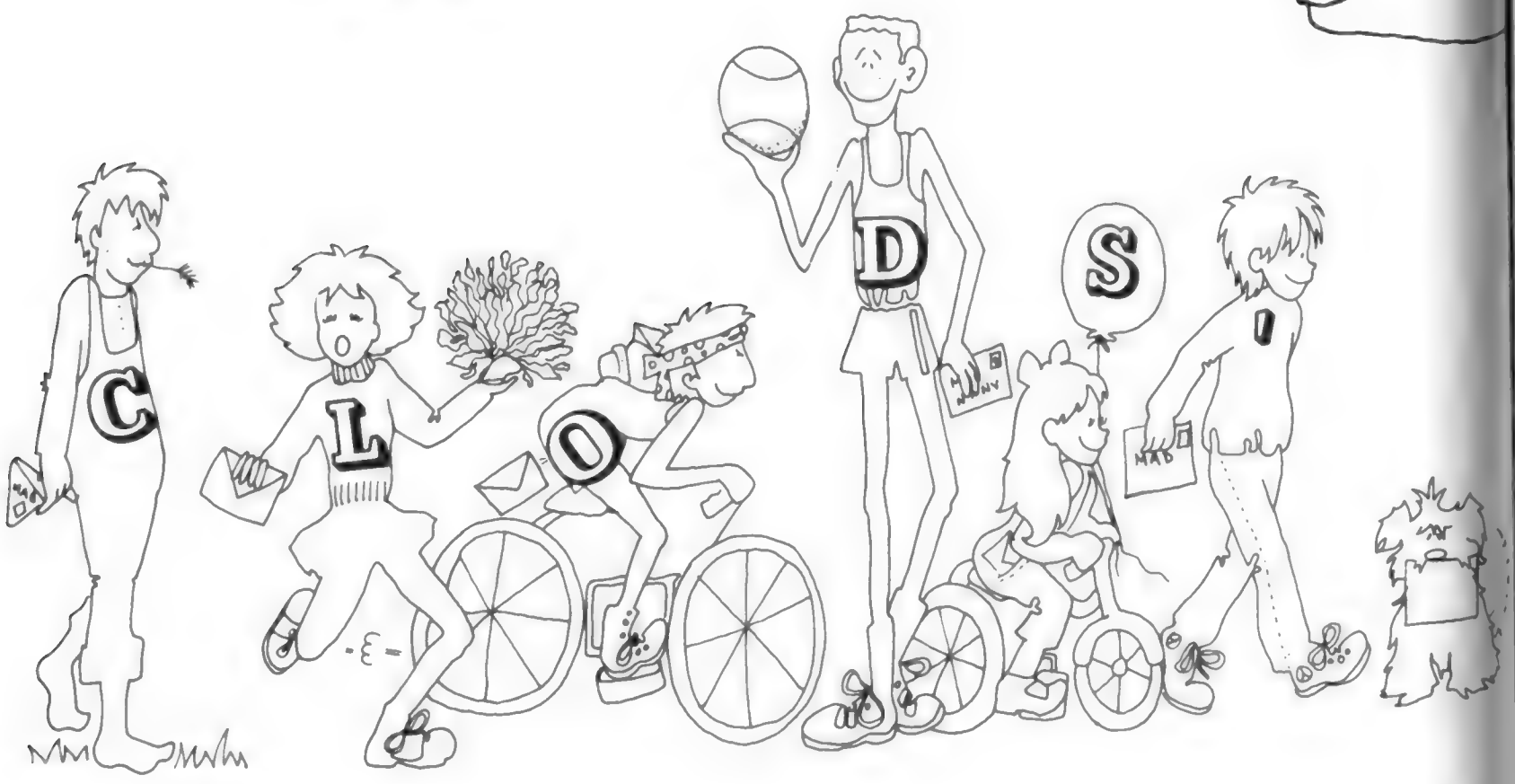




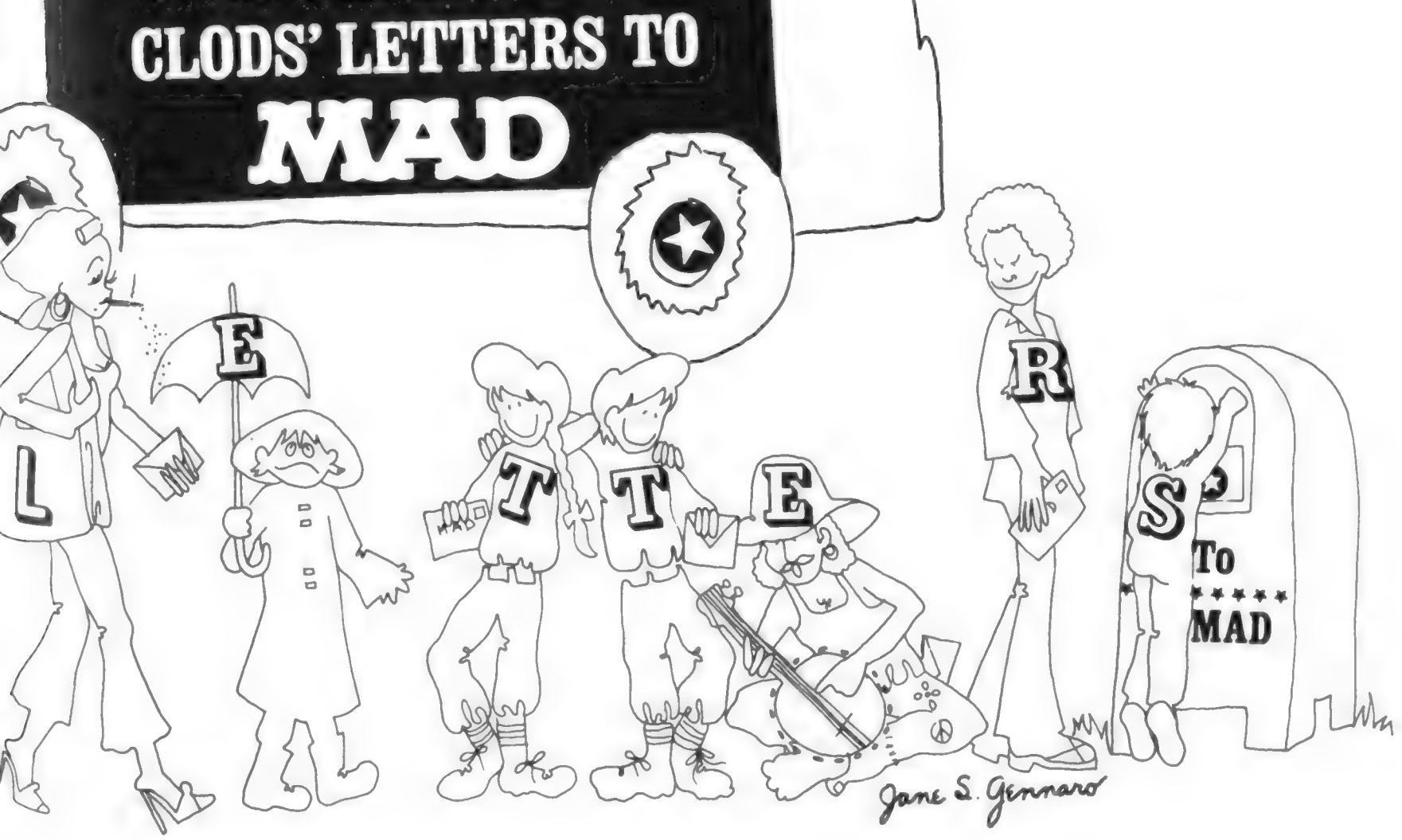


E THIS BOOK!

Mainly, we've collected all the kookie comments, screwy suggestions, asinine advice, ludicrous laments, zany zingers, crackpot criticisms, ridiculous rebukes, queer queries... and other censorable scribblings you've sent over the years!

NOW, YOU CAN SUFFER LIKE WE'VE SUFFERED, WITH THIS COLLECTION OF PROFUSELY ILLUSTRATED...

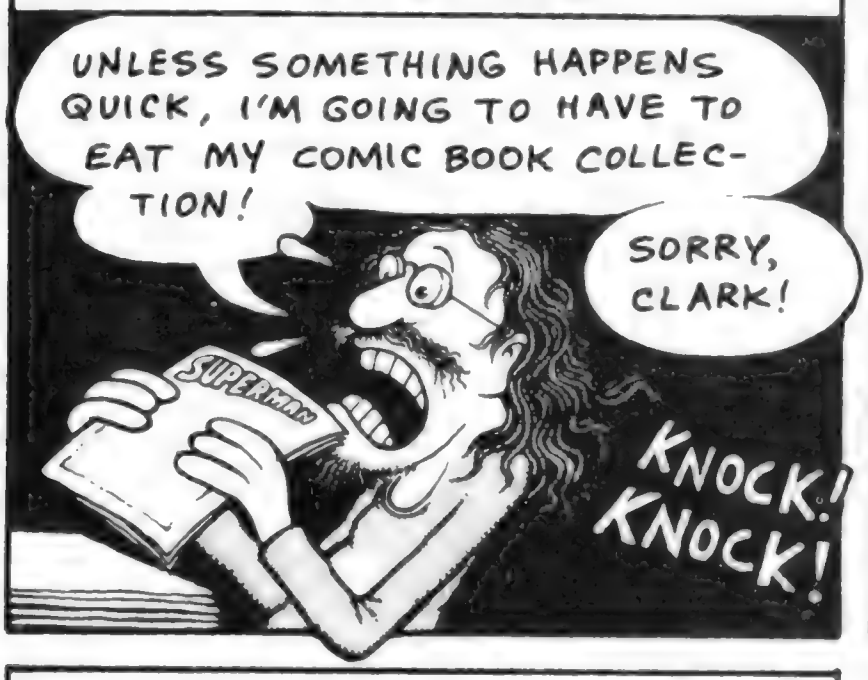
CLODS' LETTERS TO MAD



Phil Seuling

A QUICK TESTIMONIAL BY... Denis Kitchen 1/75

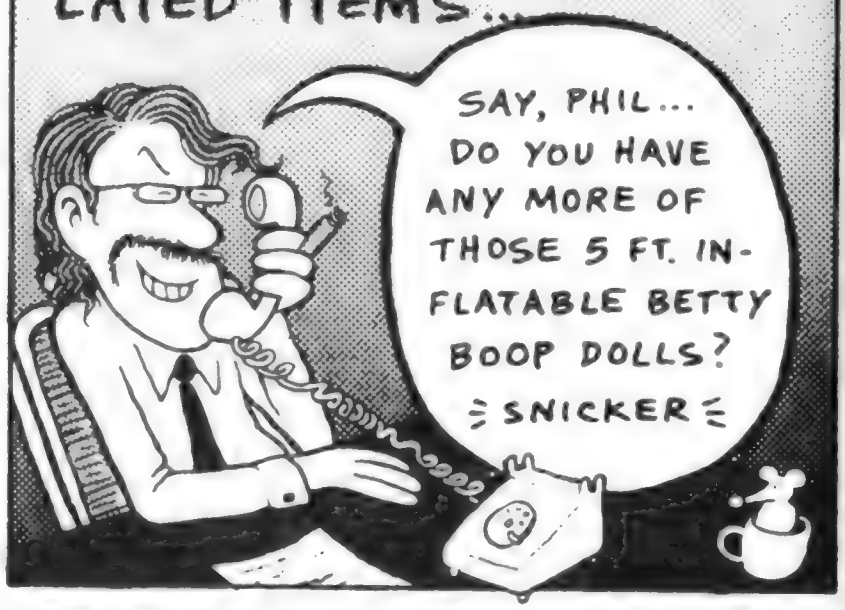
IN 1970, UNDERGROUND COMIX WERE IN THEIR INFANCY AND I WAS LITERALLY STARVING.



I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW PHIL SEULING, BUT HE GOT WIND OF MY PREDICAMENT AND SENT ME A LARGE SALAMI.

THE FOLLOWING YEAR I WENT TO HIS FAMOUS CONVENTION. WHILE IN N.Y.C. I BUMPED INTO THE SCARIEST, UGLIEST GOONS I EVER SAW! FORTUNATELY, THEY WERE PHIL'S BODYGUARDS...

IN THE YEARS SINCE, I HAVE RELIED HEAVILY ON PHIL AS A PRIME SOURCE OF OLD COMICS AND RELATED ITEMS...



SEND FOR PHIL'S **FREE** CATALOG OF VINTAGE COMICS AND OTHER STUFF... AND FOR DETAILS ABOUT HIS BIG JULY 1975 N.Y. COMIC ART CONVENTION!

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Let's say you spent weeks in the planning and design and anticipation of the Costume Parade. And let's say the results were really good. And let's say everything went wrong at the last and you got a late start and had to travel to the Convention by bus **in costume** just to save time when you arrived. And then were detained by a cop for no good reason (maybe, impersonating an officer?) and got to the Convention after the costume event was over. I'd say you'd deserve a picture in the Souvenir Program, wouldn't you?

Dear Phil,

I'm really looking forward to this year's Convention. It seems that much of my yearly career orbits around your Comic Con.

Vaughn

A famous (nay . . . notorious!) contributor to **Swank** and **Cavalier** and **National Lampoon**, Vaughn Bode has authored and drawn comics and books since 1966. His Cartoon Concert has been a fascinating feature of the Comic Art Convention for years. Most recently, Vaughn performed the Concert at the Louvre in Paris, and was awarded the 1974 Yellow Kid Award at the International Comics Congress in Lucca, Italy. Pretty fast company for Cheech Wizard to keep!

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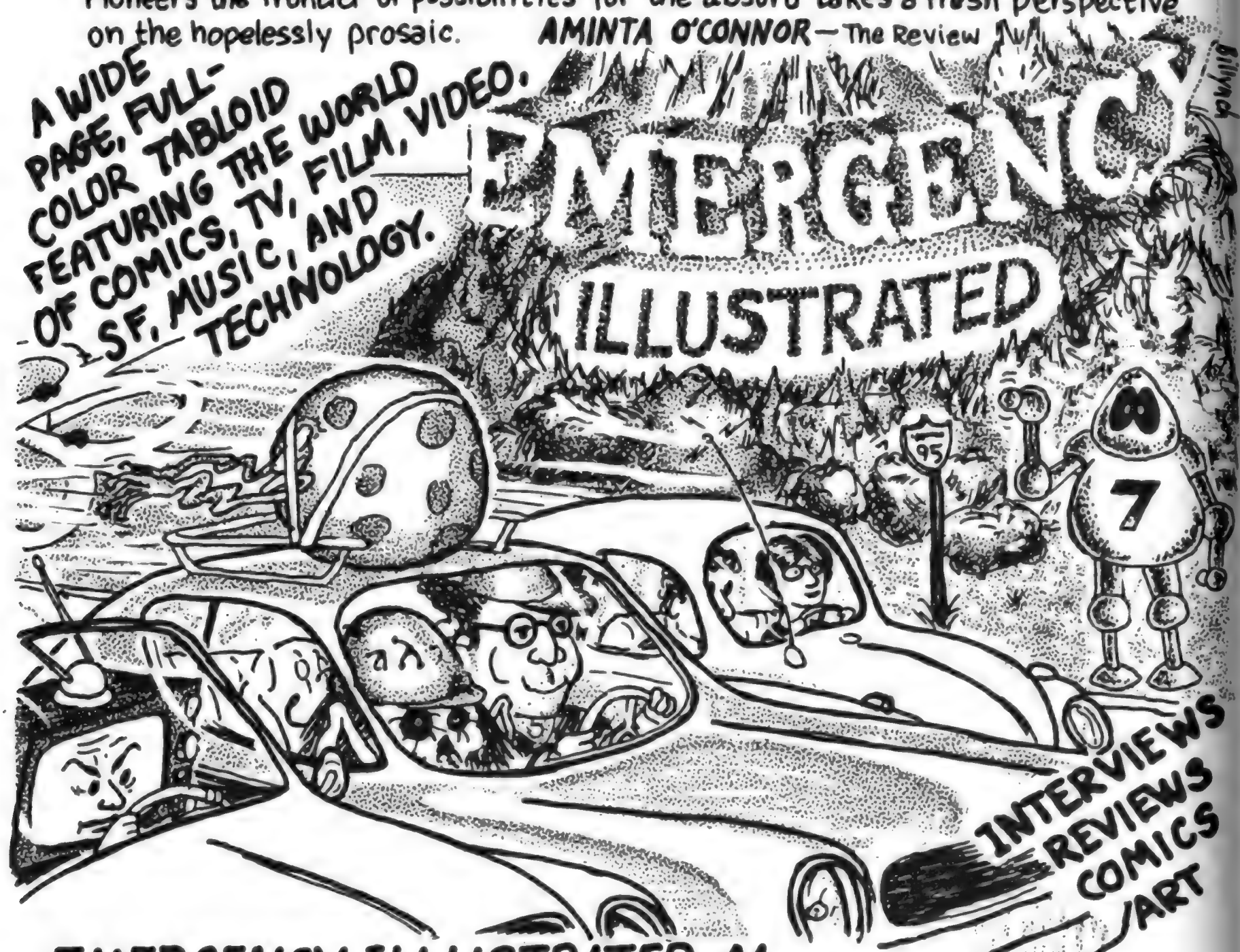

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HARTMAN MEETS... SATAN

the original ART MARKET

(A conventional view)
by Tony Dispoto

This year as every year, I'll be asked for ducks! "Have you got any good ducks, Tony?" I should be in the live poultry business. But the birds these people are after are the Donalds and Scrooges from the pen of Carl Barks. My business (and pleasure) is buying and selling comic art originals. Part of that business is listening to the comments of others. "Barks! I wish I knew about him ten years ago!"

Ten years ago the original art field was much narrower in its scope. Since then comic art has been established as worthy of critical review and museum exhibition. The Metropolitan, The Louvre, The Brooklyn Museum—all have mounted solid exhibits. And two smaller museums, one in Greenwich, Connecticut, and one in Orlando, Florida, have opened to feature comic art exclusively. But still, walking and browsing through this Convention can result in some choice catches for the established collector, or a wide selection of prizes for the beginning collector. Not all the good material is in museums.

Another feature of this Convention is its surprising cornucopia aspect. New pieces always seem to crop up. There's no other place I know of where you can see, all at one time and in one area comic book art, comic strip art, magazine illustrations, paintings, and work by Adams, Smith, Herriman, Raymond, Seagar, or even Leyendecker. Every year I come up with something to begin a new collection.

But above all, I enjoy the **personalized** collecting which can only take place at the Convention. A few words from a favorite artist, or an autograph, or bidding and winning at an auction, and I've got **stories** to go with each of my treasures.

Two more pleasures come to mind. I'd be ashamed to mention the sheer joy of just looking, filling the museum behind my eyes with great artwork which I'll enjoy throughout the rest of the year. And on a more material level, I like finding the printed version of the artwork in my collection.

To cap it all off, I'll have to add the feeling of nostalgia. The first piece of artwork I ever bought was at the New York Comic Art Convention!

ANNOUNCEMENT: TO ALL STORE-OWNERS OR MAIL ORDER DEALERS HANDLING CURRENT COMIC BOOK TITLES IN QUANTITY.

****HOW TO ORDER COMIC BOOKS WHOLESALE BY MAIL****

The direct sales method of comic book distribution is only possible under certain circumstances. There are both advantages and disadvantages to consider.

First, the service is open only to those who cannot obtain service from their local magazine distributor, or where service has broken down so far as to be completely unacceptable. It would be impossible for me to "raid" the local areas covered by wholesalers already in business.

On the positive side, the books are mailed directly from the printer to you. You get service from all the major publishers. You get 40% off the comic book prices, and 30% off the magazine prices.

On the negative side, there is no return privilege, the money must accompany your order, and there is absolutely no margin for credit.

But the best part is probably the opportunity to get exactly as many as you want of any title you want -- a chance you do not always get through a distributor.who handles hundreds of titles of magazines and newspapers besides his comic book stock.

So, if you have full knowledge of the pros and cons, and you agree to all the features (you can't take just some of the good and leave the bad) then welcome aboard.

By the way, my monthly mailing (which includes current information of interest to dealers, convention bulletins, special inserts, and the order forms for quantity orders of comic books) is $2.00 a year. The subscription guarantees that you will get the mailing on a steady basis. It's worth it.

PHIL SEULING

☆ DIRECT MAIL SALE OF BOOKS AND MAGAZINES RELATED TO COMIC BOOKS OR COMIC STRIPS ☆ WHOLESALE COMIC BOOK DISTRIBUTION SERVICE ☆ ANNUAL COMIC ART CONVENTION AND MONTHLY COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE ☆ EXHIBITS AND COMIC ART MATERIAL FOR RENTAL USE ☆ OLD AND RARE COMIC BOOKS BOUGHT AND SOLD, AS WELL AS: COLLECTIONS; COMIC STRIPS; SUNDAY COMIC SUPPLEMENTS; BIG LITTLE BOOKS; ORIGINAL COMIC BOOK AND COMIC STRIP ART; RADIO-RELATED RINGS, DE-CODERS, AND PREMIUMS; COMIC ART RELATED CARDS, BOOKS, MAGAZINES, TOYS, AND OTHER EPHEMERA

BOX 177 CONEY ISLAND STATION BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11224

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HERE'S NEWS ON AMERICA'S 2ND LARGEST COMIC CONVENTION

Creation Convention will be coming your way on Jan. 2-5 at the Commodore, 42nd and Park in Manhattan.

We're working now to ensure a fantastic time for you-special guests, films, art displays, visual shows and features, auctions, a costume parade, speeches & panels, and another of our famous Creation Dealer emporiums. A time to remember-Creation 1976.

Creation '76 will have a 175 table dealer's area.On sale and trade: comics of all types, film stuff,nostalgia collectibles, art, posters, fan work,buttons, and more! If you want to buy, sell, or swap this is the place-Be there!

Last year Stan Lee was a special guest. Wrightson, Smith, Severin, Steranko, Jones, Kaluta, Williamson, Bode; the best-attend year after year.

Our film festivals receive praise for the top in Sci-fi/fantasy/comic/animation presentations.

Displays feature art from Corben to Kirby.

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Convention chairmen are: Gary Berman and Adam Malin

kirby kirby kirby

Many tributes by intelligent critics have been written about Jack Kirby. The only thing missing from the analysis, and the celestial praise, and the biographical notes is the man's own words. And Jack Kirby is no slouch when it comes to words. He is articulate, idea-oriented, and pointed. We may see his work as so basic that it seems instinctive, but Jack has an observer's eye and an awareness of his effectiveness which make him a commentator worth listening to. As you will find in this interview, garnered from conversations Mark Evanier and I had with him when we were planning a companion volume to the King Kirby Portfolio.

Steve Sherman, 1975

Q: What is it that would compel a man, such as yourself, to stay up all hours of the night, pencilling comic books?

J: Probably something in my psychic make-up! I decided to do comics because I liked comics. I developed a deep interest in them at a rather early age and ventured to answer an ad which publicized a cartoon correspondence course. I was probably twelve or thirteen at the time. What makes me stay up all night? Probably because I want to make a living!

Q: You're asked constantly where you get your ideas from. Any clues?

J: An idea can come from anywhere. The process of creation has no standards. You either thinkit out by yourself or talk it out with someone else or with a group . . . but eventually you come out with something. Ideas are everywhere. The guy in the shipping room might come up with something and what he has to say might be quite valid. The fellow in charge has to have an editorial sense. In other words, he must recognize the salability of an idea. And, while anybody may have an idea, it is the person with the editorial capability who will recognize its relevance to the particular situation at hand. **Black Magic** came about because we saw a trend emerging in comics back in the fifties; something begun by others but which we had to pick up on if we didn't want to get left behind. It wasn't a new idea to use all those ghosts and spooks, but it was a saleable idea at the time and we were fortunate to get involved in it early. We had to compete with E.C., so it was tough.

Q: At that time, you and Joe Simon were editing, writing and drawing for the Crestwood people. And you had quite a staff under you—Some men who could rival or even surpass the crew at E.C. Editorially, were you trying to do things differently?

J: E.C. was very basic in their approach to horror. By that I mean, they left nothing to the imagination; same with most of the other horror

producers. That may have been part of their downfall. You can only throw that kind of thing at the public so long before they develop an immunity to it. I think we were a little more restrained with our stories, but that may be because we were putting out a lot of romance comics and it mellowed us somewhat.

Q: The material you did for Crestwood was, more or less, superior to what you were producing just before and after your employment there. Was this due mainly to your having editorial control?

J: Yes—In Crestwood, we had complete control of editorial policy, of writing, of artwork. We set our own standards and Joe and I just about had complete say over our material. We tried everything! We were getting into satirical strips for the first time. I tried to do a satirical super-hero with Jack Oleck's **Fighting American** in order to get something new and, hopefully, get some response from a declining readership. They did as well as any books of their time. It sounds like I might be finding excuses, but the field was in very bad straits at that time. Not only did publishers have internal pressures, but they also had external pressures. One day a guy might buy a new car, and the next day find the publisher cleaning out the offices. They were in a shaky frame of mind. Only the publishers with outside sources of revenue had any confidence at all.

Q: You had a fine staff, though—

J: Extremely talented! Some of the best men the field has ever seen were part of our staff. It was a wonderful time to work in the field —if you neglect the financial problems. I wouldn't class the fifties as the greatest period in comics—it was, to be frank, a really ugly period. Ugly clothes, cars, people. But it was a time when the most productive people in comics were still in the field. Marvin Stein was with us—He was a first-rate man and one of the best artists we had. Mort Meskin was at his height. Steve Ditko was blossoming out and doing fine work. There were still writers and artists around . . . Good ones. It was certainly akin to working in a sort of Renaissance period.

Q: Were people trying to break into the field at that time?

J: Well, I think many more were trying to get out (Laughs). But, yes, we had guys coming up who wanted to break in. People like Jules Feiffer, Roy Lichtenstein. If their stuff looked good, we'd give them a script. More than once, we'd give a guy a script and never see him again.

Q: As the fifties drew to a close, the super-heroes began to return. When you began the **Challengers of the Unknown**, were you striving more for a super-hero rebirth or for

breaking into science fiction and adventure material more?

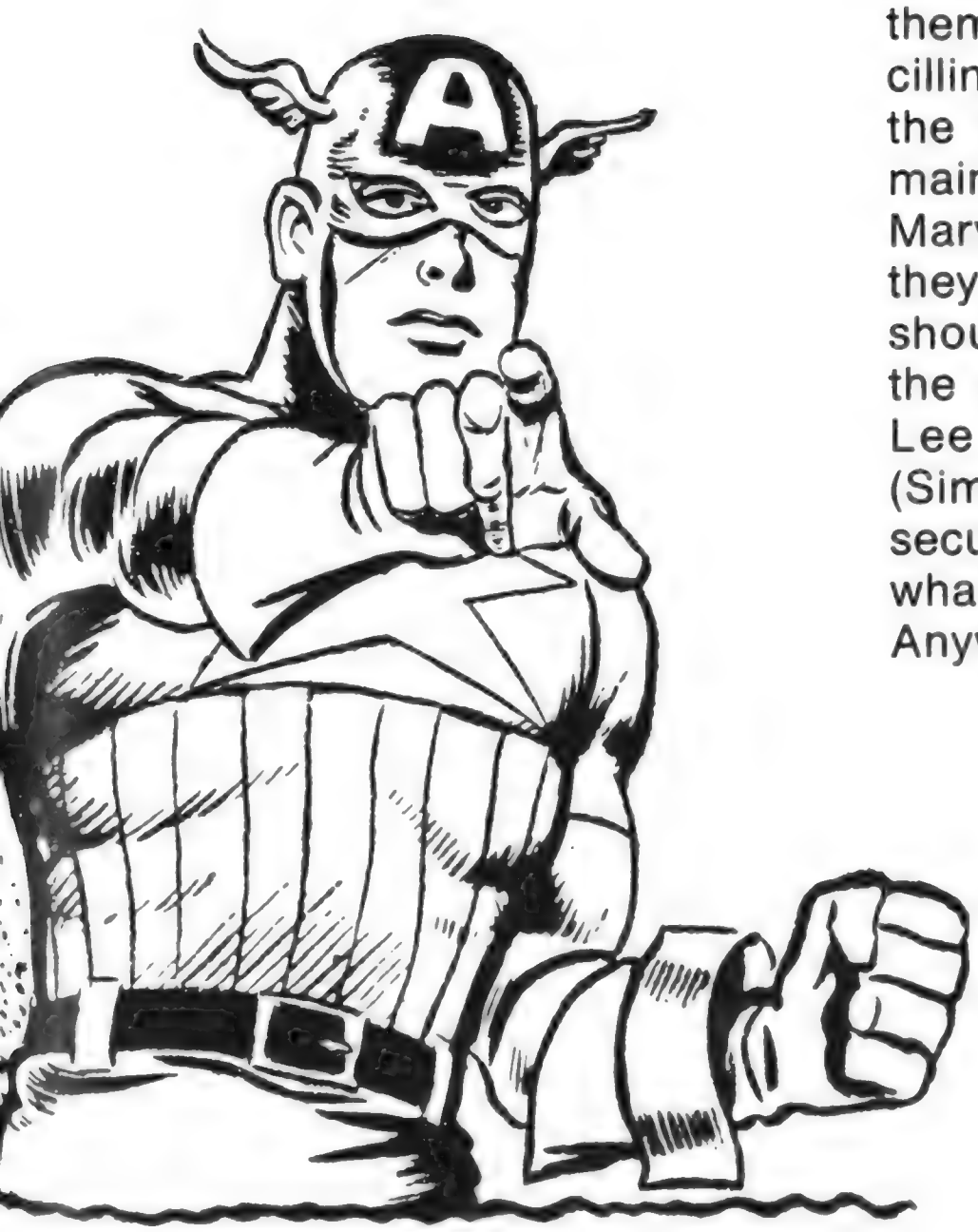
J: The issues I did were still formative and I can't answer for what DC did with them. But they were heading for the super-hero image when I left. In many ways, they were the predecessors of the FF.

Q: At this time, you also started again at Marvel.

J: Right. I was given monsters, so I did them. I would much rather have been drawing **Rawhide Kid**. But I did the monsters . . . we had Grottu and Kurrgo and It . . . it was a challenge to try to do something—**anything** with such ridiculous characters. But these were, in a way, the forefathers of the Marvel super-heroes. We had a Thing, we had a Hulk . . . and we tried to do them in a more exciting way.

Q: About your drawing. At your fastest, during that time, do you have any idea how many books you were doing?

J: I felt, for a while, like I was doing them all. The stuff I wasn't pencilling, I was doing lay-outs on. I got the books going—I think that was mainly my function—so that, as Marvel acquired a top-notch staff, they could keep them going. You should remember that prior to this the entire staff consisted of Stan Lee, Sol (Brodsky) and Artie (Simek). Artie was in the most secure position, because no matter what, the books had to be lettered. Anyway, I laid out the first **Iron Man**



and plotted it and Don Heck finished it up. Same with **Daredevil**—Bill Everett pencilled it over my break-downs. And I'd pass them on to other people.

Q: Were you pencilling much faster then?

J: Yes—There were lots of pressures and I was struggling most of the time. I prefer to pencil three pages on an average day or if it's a cover, about three hours.

Q: What do you consider a good artist?

J: One with imagination and the ability to tell a good story. How well a man draws cuts no ice with me, if what he's trying to express comes out vague and choppy.

Q: What about writers?

J: The same type of man. A guy with a fertile, active mind. The writer I respected most is now deceased. His name was Eddie Herron. He created the original Captain Marvel and was responsible for numerous stories which I considered top rate. He also fathered the Red Skull.

Q: Was it easier to write the stories back then?

J: Well, maybe not easier in terms of the time required. In simplicity, yes. By that I mean World War II lent itself to good dramas. The whole thing could have been written by some hack out at Warner Brothers. It was a black and white issue with a villain who was so completely evil that it was just made to order. Anything you did in World War II was an act of nobility. If you hung Hitler or killed hundreds of Germans, you were on the side of the Angels. I once got a letter from a Nazi who told me to pick out any lamppost I wanted on Times Square because, when Hitler arrived, they'd hang me from it. It was typical of a genre of fans who have long since died out.

Q: You enjoy reading the mail, don't you?

J: Yes, I love it. I think that's because I love the fans—even if some of them are Nazis. But when we were doing those romance comics at Crestwood, you should have seen the mail we got. There was some lady who wanted me to adopt her daughter because she could tell from my stories that I was a good man!

Q: Why was it always Simon and Kirby?

Q: Simon was bigger! He was also the letterer, most of the time. With a parlay like that, I didn't have a chance. He's also older then me—like a big brother. He was great at lay-outs. One of the few true professionals this field has seen. He still is.

Q: So why did he give up comics and get into magazines?

J: He was discouraged. A lot of guys were and Joe wasn't the first guy to try for bigger things. When Crestwood went under, it was typical of a lot of bad breaks we all had to put up with. A lot of guys got out of comics for one reason or another . . . C.C. Beck, Eisner, Kurtzman . . . People of importance to comics left. I suppose I'm considered some sort of a dinosaur in the field, but I'm sticking with comics. I feel it's an important and powerful medium. I feel it's been belabored by people who have an ax to grind—It's been down and it should be lifted to a point where it really proves its national importance. This is a visual age and comics are a visual medium. Not only can the intellectuals grasp it, but also the common man. And, despite what a lot of people may say, it's the common men who make history.

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BARRY SMITH interview

Tom Watkins
Craig Dawson

This interview with Barry Smith was conducted by Craig Dawson and me at the Hotel Commodore during the July 1974 Comicon. We started to do a videotape interview but equipment failure cost us our tape. Fortunately, I had left a cassette recorder running "just in case."

As we began, Barry was putting the finishing touches on a hand-colored **Four Ages** print. On hand also were Linda Lessman and Tom Fagan. Barry kindly continued the interview beyond the intended time limit, and I thank him for that.

Barry Smith proved to be as fine a person as he is an artist. I can't think of a better compliment.

—Tom Watkins

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CRAIG: Just what were you doing in England before you got involved with Marvel Comics?

BARRY: Nothing. I'd just left college art school and there are no comics in England, per se. There **are** comics . . . funny papers, you know. And I just had this irresistible urge to **draw,** not necessarily comics, but something of a fantasy nature. And there was an **extremely** tiny underground fan -fantasy type clique somewhere in West London. It's just such a turn-off, that kind of thing . . . everybody's hairy and needs a bath. Everybody meets in their bedrooms and reads DR. STRANGE . . . and I couldn't get into it, so I just came here, hoping I could get a job. And after a while, I did.

CRAIG: Did you go to the other companies . . . besides Marvel?

BARRY: No, Marvel was the only company I could hold an interest in, because of Jack Kirby. At the time, which was '68, National Comics was putrid, thoroughly inept, putting out awful, terrible copies of Marvel Comics . . . Probably their best artist was Gil Kane, at that time. Although Adams was working for National at the time, I didn't know too much about Adams.

TOM: Were you familiar, then, with Kubert's work?

BARRY: Oh yeah, Kubert. Of course! Yeah, I was familiar with him, with his work. Sgt. Rock, Hawkman and like that. I always liked Kubert, but he never inspired me greatly. Terrific drawer, great inker, very **gruff** manner with the ink . . . but Jack Kirby—I just thought he was some kind of genius, the first great genius of comics and probably the last.

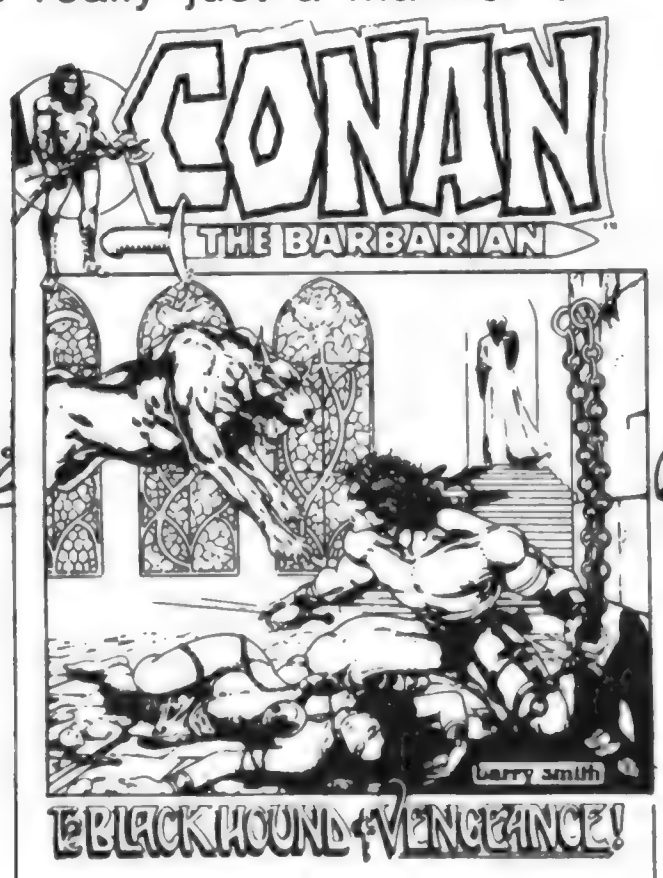
CRAIG: The first time I saw any of your work was on a Marvel Comics cover, and at a distance, I thought it was Kirby. And when I got up closer . . . there was no signature on that. Later on I saw a Kazar cover which you **did** sign and that was the first I'd ever heard of your name. Your style was **very** heavily Kirby influenced. When did you really come into your own?

BARRY: I guess when I started Conan, the Kirby influence at the time was superfluous. I never swiped from Kirby like a lot of people do nowadays, but seeing no other artist **but** Jack Kirby, I thought the only way to draw muscles was these great bulging things with squiggles. I just didn't know anything other than Jack Kirby at the time. I was 19 when I started working at Marvel Comics. You really don't form an opinion of much of anything when you're 19. It was really just a manner of . . . I think you can call it coincidence, but it's hardly that. It's just a manner of natural progression. At the time that came along I was just growing a little bit older. As the days went by, one grows older. And I was back in England at that time, since I'd been kicked out of this country. I was just doing a few little sort of silly short stories. And by that time all the comics I'd done the year previously had come out. They were sending me the print as they came out. And I was terribly embarrassed by seeing the stuff . . . Those DAREDEVILS.

CRAIG: Your layout style on those DAREDEVILS is incredible. I consider the **drawing** itself kind of crude, but the layout work shows an incredible amount of potential.

BARRY: Thank you. The last two DAREDEVILS maybe, now that I think of it. The first one was pretty cruddy . . . everybody looked the same. And the coloring was **abysmal.** But the last two DAREDEVILS, in fact, were a marvelous thing for me.

It was just at the time when Stan had quit the book and Roy had taken over, and Roy just didn't know what the heck to do with Daredevil. He never touched the character before, as far as I know. It seemed like right from the outset Roy had a trust in me for some



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reason, that I would tromp through. So he just left me alone. Which was a lot to ask of him, because I was still like a kid in the office somewhat. So he just said, "All right, what are you going to do now?" I said, "I really don't know. I'll do it and show it to you tomorrow." Which is just what I **did** do. I just made up the story as I went along.

On that DAREDEVIL series, on that Stan Saxon stuff, I just sat around. I look back on them now and the artwork is really incredibly crude, some of it's really barren, but the stories I really like, I just made 'em up! I just got this weird character, Stan Saxon, so I made him a little bit "faggy," you know? Just played around with these silly little things. All those twinkling New York scenes, which were impressing me a great deal, because I'd been living in the country . . . To see all these big buildings with twinkles all over them at night . . . And it was just sort of an outrageous cartoon about it.

Roy really liked it and I enjoyed it a great deal. The AVENGERS didn't work out too well because I wasn't **trying** there. With the AVENGERS I was just trying to imitate what I did with the DAREDEVIL thing, because I saw that it came out nice. But I started CONAN in the middle of 1969 . . . or perhaps a little bit after that. And I was embarrassed by my early work (which to me was six months old). I was just trying very hard to get better, as anybody naturally would. Nobody **tries** to get worse. Well perhaps they do, some of them. I just tried to get better.

TOM: You've done a lot of coloring of your own work at Marvel. How do

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the line, oftimes outside the panel. If it's **really** bad, right off the page. So the best thing to do is go to pastel—if they screw it up, it doesn't look so bad. That's my basic reason. And, frankly, I just **like** pastels. There's a more subtle characterization of things that you get in the color.

TOM: You've had a lot of different inkers, especially on the CONAN book. Which one do you think captured your style the best, and maybe added something more to your work?

BARRY: Nobody added anything to it. That sounds flash, but **nobody** really added anything. The pencils on CONAN from about issue number four on were so tight that you could have just printed them straight from the pencils.

TOM: That was done on number 19?

BARRY: Well, I said you could have printed them from the pencils, but that was if the printing process had been just slightly better than what comics use.

CRAIG: In a black and white book, that would have been beautiful but the color seems to obliterate most of the line.

BARRY: Well, I colored that book. You're talking about "Hawks from the Sea"?

CRAIG: Yes.

BARRY: I was coloring it at the time, even though I received no credit for it. And I had to color it with all the weirdest colors you could imagine! If you look at the first half of that book—or better yet, the one that comes after it, which is "Black Hound of Vengeance," and then look at that book which is

you usually go about it? When you draw the artwork, are you figuring out the color as you go along? A definite color scheme?

BARRY: Well, I wasn't coloring the books until I came back to this country. I did the first eleven issues [CONAN] or so in England. And I knew I couldn't do any of the color work or anything but the pencil, because it was all out of my hands. So at those times I tried not to think about color, because I knew I couldn't get into whole long letters to the colorist on what to do and what not to do, so I just tried to put it out of my mind. When I got back to this country . . . oh . . . after about the first six months, because it was just a screwed up time—you just don't move your whole **house** and everything from one country and try to accomplish anything—after I settled down, I sort of tried to draw the books with color in mind. For the most part it was only the last few months of doing the actual series that I was extremely conscious of it.

TOM: The coloring was really beautiful in the CONANs that you did before you left the book, the ones you were talking about. I notice you've done this hand-colored watercolor print ("The Four Ages") with the same kind of color scheme, very soft pastel colors as opposed to the usual . . .

BARRY: Harsh, garish colors? I don't like harsh, garish colors. Who does? Harsh and garish colors, are all right sometimes in certain situations, if you've got good printing. You know, like if you use solid blue or bright red in comics, most places look **awful,** because it's all hand separated. You get big blobs of color. It just goes right outside of

"Hawks from the Sea," you'll see an extreme difference in colors. I had to color "Hawks" in colors I just wouldn't naturally use because it's the same old story of heavy blues on those pencil lines. There would have **been** no pencil lines. They'd have disappeared entirely. As it happens, I would say that about 40% of the pencil drawings just disappeared on the printed page, because the printing is atrocious, the paper's awful . . .

CRAIG: Do you know it there's any plan to reprint that in the CONAN black and white book?

BARRY: I hope not! I sold the originals!

(**Everyone:** laughter.)

CRAIG: Do you feel that all comic work done by the artist **should** be returned to him?

BARRY: Absolutely.

CRAIG: The policy now . . . What exactly **is** the policy now? It's theirs after you're done with it?

BARRY: No, no, no. The policy's been changed now. I don't have that much to do with it anymore.

As I understand it, if the artist pencils and inks it himself, he gets it back, but if he just pencils it and some other bloke inks it, then there's some sort of dispute. Which is really silly, because no inker has ever done that great amount of work, not even Tom Palmer or Joe Sinnett.

CRAIG: Wally Wood?

BARRY: It's like the penciler is the creator of the page.

BARRY: Comics can be a great art form.

CRAIG: It **is.** When everyone involved with it seems to care and tries to . . .

BARRY: But the people that care are only 5% It can't be more than that.

TOM: I'm personally of the opinion that comics were generally at their finest point in the 50's. There were a lot of individual efforts . . .

BARRY: You mean E.C.?

TOM: No, outside of E.C. Simon and Kirby, and later just Kirby by himself went from company to company and they had editorial control over what they were doing, and they produced really fine books. The BLACK MAGIC books usually had incredible covers . . .

BARRY: There have been fine books coming out all the time, but Kirby is one of those exceptional people. Like the Kubert TOR.

TOM: Another one man job.

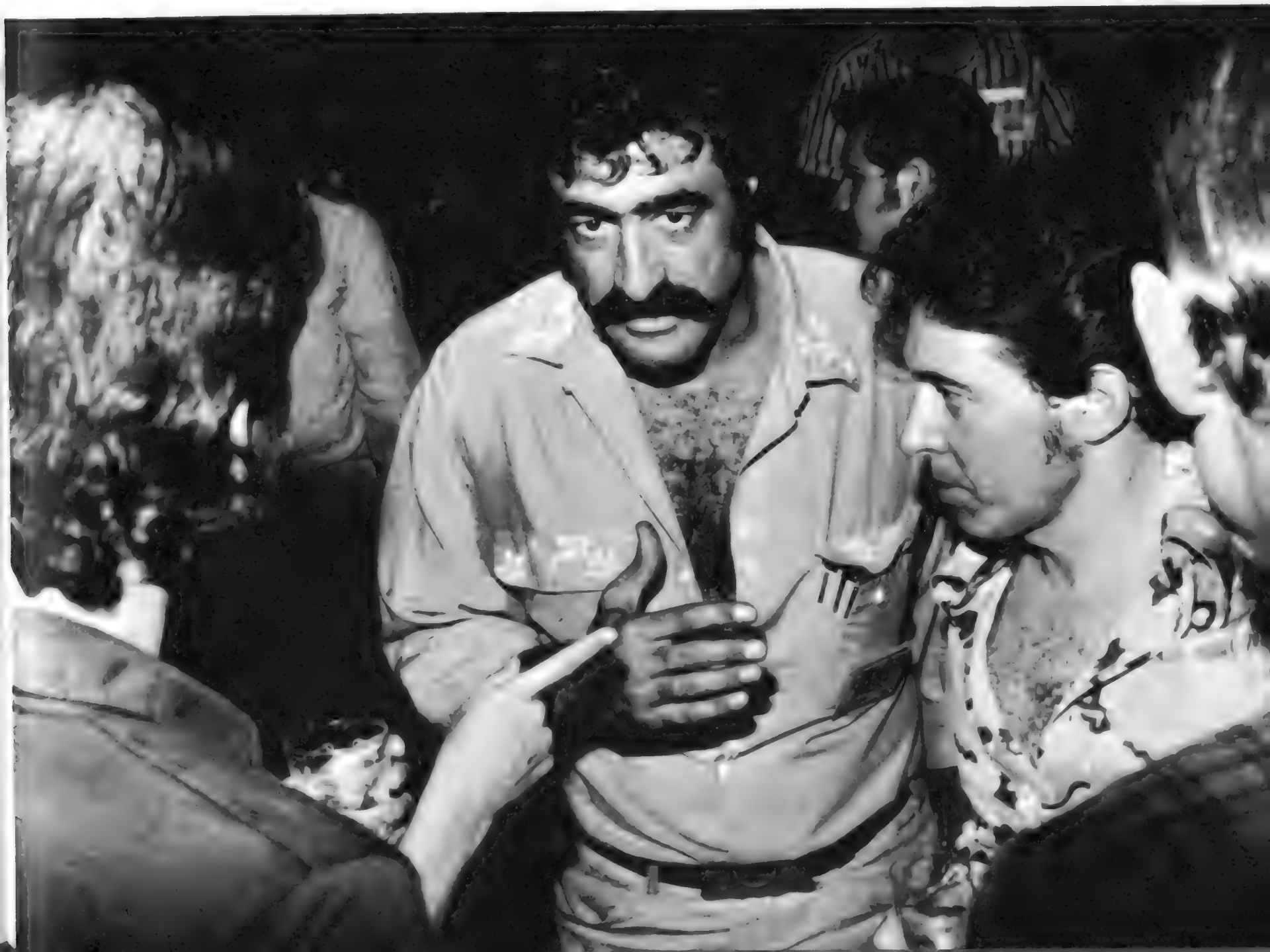
BARRY: Unlike nowadays. In fact nowadays there are people who are more involved. There **are** more young people who are trying really very hard. And they've really got good ideas too. But I don't know how it's going to last. I keep reading this rubbish about the "New Wave." I was reading some magazine last night that dared to include me in the "New Wave." I really felt so weird about it. Like, how long's it going to last?

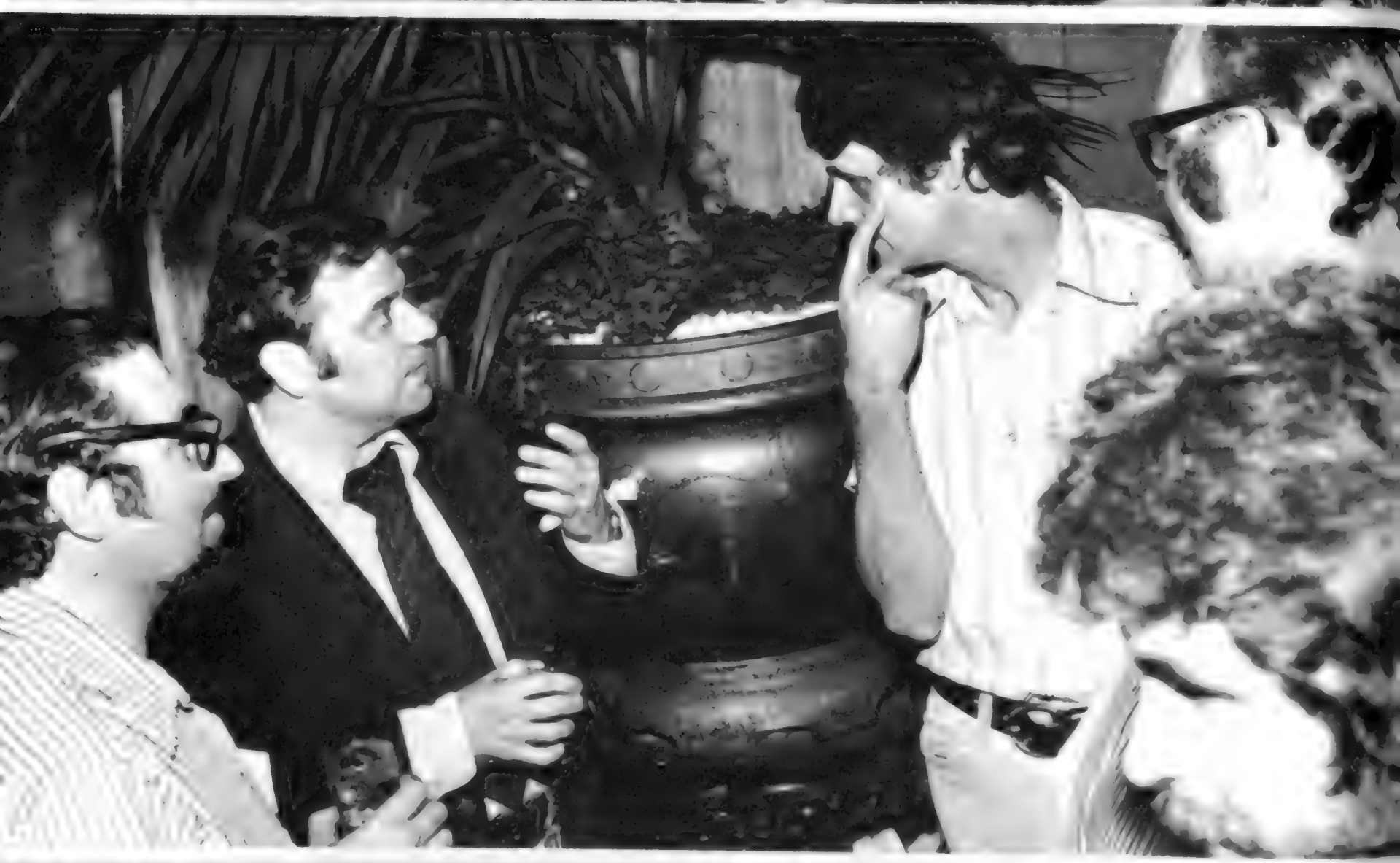
TOM: Your work is more and more along the lines of illustrative work. And with the exception of the CONANs for Marvel (which I hear sometimes you're going to be doing and sometime you're not) you're not doing anything but illustration now, are you?

BARRY: This is more **personal** art. Illustration implies illustrating something, which this isn't. This is just doing something I thought of.

I'm doing my own art thing now. For better or worse.

PERSONALITIES





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